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# MILTON'S THEORY OF POETRY AND FINE ART

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# MILTON'S THEORY OF POETRY AND FINE ART

## AN ESSAY

WITH A COLLECTION OF ILLUSTRATIVE
PASSAGES FROM HIS WORKS

BY
A IDA LANGDON

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TO
PROFESSOR LANE COOPER

# PREFACE

Briefly stated, my purpose in this volume has been to assemble Milton's references to poetry and the other fine arts, and as far as possible to formulate his 'poetics.' The study was first undertaken for a doctoral dissertation at Cornell University, and, as originally carried out under the supervision of Professor Lane Cooper, was submitted to that end, and accepted in June, 1912. During the last few years, as opportunity permitted, I have revised and enlarged it, while constantly indebted to Professor Cooper for generous and valuable assistance. Whatever merit the book may possess is in great part the result of his interest.

An attempt to arrange and combine the chance-elements of a theory of poetry which Milton let fall, but never set forth consecutively or at length, immediately suggests the question, How would he have been most likely to present this theory for himself? Would he have embodied it in an analytical treatise like the *Poetics* of Aristotle, in didactic verse like the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, in a literary essay like Sir Philip Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, or in some other type of composition? But no effort to make a sharp distinction among these different kinds of criticism is, for my purpose, quite successful, because, as we at once observe, the chief aim of Sidney's essay, for example, no less than of the Aristotelian treatise, is to define poetry as an art, governed by laws of its own, and involving a special technique and an exacting method. Superficially distinct, and primarily designed for different readers, all these writings deal with what is essentially the same subject-matter. Accordingly, in the present study, I have not thought it advisable to draw a line separating the provinces of the more familiar types of poetical criticism, or to reject materials that appear suitable to any one of them. In order to exhibit Milton's conception of poetry and poetical technique, I have collected and discussed both such passages from his writings as he conceivably might have combined in a rigorously scientific poetics or didactic discourse, and such as he might have expanded into an essay on poetry in general, or a 'defence' of it, or a eulogy. With a liberal criterion in mind, I have also availed myself of scattered remarks which, though perhaps not all of them reducible to the unity of a systematic work, might easily have been gathered together into some such collection of the 'raw material of facts and thoughts' as Ben Jonson's *Timber*.

The net result, then, of my efforts is a collection, as thorough as I knew how to make it, of the references in all of Milton's works to all the fine arts, and a synthesis of the more important of them that is designed to give due emphasis to his views on poetry. Obviously such a study has limitations. There are unavoidable gaps and broken sequences, and often where it might seem most important to be comprehensive and explicit, the lack of data has necessitated either an element of hypothesis or complete silence. My investigation of Milton's attitude toward his art led me to consider the influence which, it is apparent, he received from the ancients, and from the theorists, especially the Italians, of the Renaissance. Whenever I could I have related his theory to its classical and neo-classical sources; and this procedure, I believe, has added to the value of the work, giving it some measure of completeness and coherence. In its present form, consequently, the study would gain significance from being read in connection with almost any one of the historical treatises on poetry, whether of the classical period or of the Italian or English Renaissance, and its contents would then fall into a truer perspective.

The passages from Milton upon which my discussion rests have been appended to it in a classified list (pp. 185-314). In some cases, notably under the headings 'Form,' 'Art,' 'Nature,' and 'Rhetoric,' the references are not exhaustive. The texts I have used in preparing the study, and referred to in its pages, are, for the poetry, that of Beeching (Oxford University Press, 1908), and, for the prose, that of Mitford (Pickering, London, 1851). The sonnets have been numbered as in the Oxford text; the letters and the *Prolusions*, as in that of Pickering. In a parenthesis after the title of such works in his prose as Milton divided into parts, references are given to these parts. I have made use of the following translations: for the Latin and the Italian verse, those of Cowper, with an occasional citation from Moody; for the *Prolusions*, (when possible) those given by Masson in his *Life of John Milton*; for the letters (with a few exceptions where I have substituted, because of their greater accuracy, the translations of Hall), those of Fellowes, given in Symmons' edition of the *Prose Works of John Milton*, Vol. 1; for *The Second Defence of the People of England*, that of Fellowes in Symmons, Vol. 6; for *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*, that of Sumner. More precise references to these works will be found in the Bibliography. In a few instances it has been necessary to supply translations of my own. In quoting the writings of Milton, I have normalized spelling and punctuation, usually taking as a guide for the poetry the Oxford Miniature Milton (1904). In citing other authors, I have not always been consistent in these particulars. With Spenser's orthography, except in his prose, I have not tampered, but that of the sixteenth-century essayists I usually have modernized. Finally, the method of reference, and the abbreviations of titles employed, both in the footnotes of my discussion and in the headings of the Illustrative Passages, have been made clear either in the List of Abbreviations of Milton's Works or in the Bibliography.

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# CHAPTER I

## THE LEADING PRINCIPLES IN MILTON'S THEORY OF FINE ART

All sound aesthetic theory rests upon the assumption of a definite relationship between form and function in a work of art. The theorist, whatever his concern, be it a rose-window or a bas-relief, a pastoral idyll or a Pindaric ode, may begin with either aspect, and gradually move to the other, but in his ultimate judgment he will merge the two, and see them as one and the same. Accordingly, the fine arts in general, when duly examined, have always been subjected to a twofold investigation involving the structure of the individual masterpiece and its end or purpose—an investigation, that is, which from the beginning tends completely to associate form and function. And it appears to be true that the great modern poets, cherishing a philosophical tradition that goes back through Aristotle to Plato, have modified their theory and practice in harmony with a belief in the law of form, and, by conscious endeavor or unconscious emphasis, have led the acute and sympathetic reader to perceive the law in its varied manifestations. Poets deeply imbued with the concept, as were Dante, and Spenser, and Milton, constantly attend to the correspondence between spirit and substance, or, we may say, between form and function, and would have us realize that where, in particular cases, a maladjustment is apparent, accidental causes are at work. If the vision of the sculptor takes clumsy shape before our eyes, or the utterance of the lyric singer falls harshly upon our ears, the deformity, as Dante might explain,[1] is traceable to a flaw in the artist's concept, to his imperfect control of his medium, or else to the inherent stubbornness of the medium itself, rather than to any failure of the principle in accordance with which he struggles for precision and beauty—that is, for perfection. Since an artist's position regarding the law of form clearly affects his entire aesthetic theory, we shall first study Milton's view of the matter.

Milton takes his position unequivocally. He would be an opponent of the recent creed of art for art's sake, and of all standards that blind the critic to the vanity of artistic purpose in a random display of talent. An art, so he says in the Preface to his rendering of the *Logic* of Ramus, is what it is because of what it teaches, and no rule of art, but the higher utility resulting from the practice of rules, constitutes its form.[2] Later in the same work he introduces a definition of form: *Forma est causa per quam res est id quod est.*[3]

The definition remains for him no mere bookish abstraction; in expository or argumentative passages he clearly paraphrases or almost literally translates it as a sound general principle, or as the truth upon which some concrete issue turns. Thus in *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine* he writes: 'For it is faith that justifies, not agreement with the Decalogue; and that which justifies can alone render any work good; none therefore of our works can be good but by faith; hence faith is the essential form of good works; the definition of form being that by which a thing is what it is.'[1] And in *Colasterion* he inquires regarding marriage (the essential form of which he has elsewhere defined as 'the mutual exercise of benevolence, love, help, and solace between the espoused parties'[2]): 'How can a thing exist when the true essence thereof is dissolved?'[3]

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[1] See *Paradiso* 1.127–129; *De Monarchia* 2.20 ff.

[2] The passage is as follows: 'Forma sive ipsa ratio artis, non tam est praeceptorum illorum methodica dispositio, quam utilis alicujus rei praeceptio: per id enim quod docet potius quam per ordinem docendi, ars est id quod est.' *Artis Logicae* (Praef.), *Works* 7.4.

[3] *Artis Logicae* (Bk. 1, chap. 7), *Works* 7.21. This work on logic contains so much material bearing upon form and function, and upon the relation of art and nature, that, although it has been characterized as a digest of the *Logic* of Peter Ramus, it undoubtedly should be consulted in a study of Milton's aesthetic theory.

To Milton, then, things are the expression of their inner spirit, or, to put it another way, they are what in the fullest sense they do. His conviction goes far toward placing him as a theorist, and immediately gives direction to our inquiry. Once on the watch for the idea, we find it everywhere. In fact, from the varied and unexpected contexts with which it appears, we realize that in the field of his interests that we are studying this notion must have been dominant; for, if it qualified his whole judgment of life, it certainly controlled his theory of art. Though it emerges in more varied ways, and perhaps more explicitly, from his prose, it nowhere has greater significance than in his poetry. Indeed, to lose track of it in *Paradise Lost* is to be unaware of the full inspiration of that great poem. This we shall later see; let us now deal with the more striking casual traces of the philosophical view in question.

Among the direct and simple outgrowths of Milton's preoccupation with the law of form is his insistence upon definiteness of purpose. For him, 'there is some use of everything,'[1] and nothing is fully known until its highest usefulness has been identified. In general his teleology is positive. 'There can be no doubt,' he writes, 'but that everything in the world, by the beauty of its order and the evidence of a determinate and beneficial purpose which pervades it, testifies that some supreme efficient Power must have pre-existed by which the whole was ordained for a specific end.'[2] The passage makes clear that, according to Milton's philosophy, every created thing ideally renders a good service, and evil is present only when there is some violation of the law. When a violation confronts him, Milton does not lose faith in his reasoning, but concludes that, under abnormal conditions, things realize themselves only negatively. At best, perverted from their proper function by what he calls 'worst abuse,' or 'meanest use,'[3] they lapse into absurdity, or meet a 'ridiculous frustration';[4]

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[1] *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 2, chap. 1), trans. by Sumner, 2.240.

[2] *Ibid.* (Bk. 1, chap. 10), trans. by Sumner, 1.320–321.

[3] *Colasterion, Works* 4.368.

[1] *Eikonoclastes* (8), *Works* 3.392.

[2] *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 1, chap. 2), trans. by Sumner, 1.16–17.

[3] Cf. *Romeo and Juliet* 2.3.17–20:

> For nought so vile that on the earth doth live
> But to the earth some special good doth give,
> Nor aught so good but, strained from that fair use,
> Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse.

[4] Milton frequently employs the adjective *ridiculous* to designate the state of absurdity resulting from uselessness or misuse. See the following examples:

[The law] 'reducing itself to the state of neither saving nor condemning, . . . will not fail to expire solemnly *ridiculous.*' *Tetrachordon* (Matt. 19. 7, 8), *Works* 4.217–218.

'Who have been so prudent as never to employ the civil sword further than the edge of it could reach, that is to civil offenses only, proving always against objects that were spiritual a *ridiculous* weapon.' *Ormond*, *Works* 4.563.

'Agricola, discerning that those little targets and unwieldy glaves ill-pointed would soon become *ridiculous* against the thrust and close, comat worst, they grow malign and harmful, or suffer the curse of God, and become 'for evil only, good.'

It is hard to distinguish between Milton's search for the purpose, and his insight into the spirit, of all reality. With him, the one examination but completed the other. Though forced to admit that 'good events oftimes arise from evil occasions' he did not feel his logic compromised, and would have agreed with that maxim of La Rochefoucauld: 'No matter how brilliant an action may be, it ought not to pass for great unless it is the result of a great motive.' Sobriety and industry, patient effort and daring, are meaningless, perhaps vicious, unless the end for which they are practised form them in 'the lovely shapes of virtues and graces.'[1] Thus explorers, if their achievements are to be called heroic, must be moved by higher impulses than the love of gain;[2] soldiers must know the reason of their valor,[3] and must rate the feats of war most honorable as they soonest exact a victorious peace;[4] lawgivers must look to the intention of every precept;[5] ministers, if they would escape

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manded three Batavian cohorts, and two of the Tungrians exercised and armed for close fight, to draw up and come to handy-strokes.' *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 5.70.

> Thus was the building left
> *Ridiculous*, and the work Confusion named. *P. L.* 12.61–62.

The 'building' is the tower of Babel.

> Weaponless himself,
> Made arms *ridiculous*, useless the forgery
> Of brazen shield and spear. *S. A.* 130–131.
>
> Not to sit idle with so great a gift
> Useless, and thence *ridiculous*, about him. *S. A.* 1500–1501.

[1] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 1., chap 2), *Works* 3.103.
*Moscovia* (chap. 5), *Works* 8.502.
[3] *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 3), *Works* 5.100.
[4] *Ibid.* (Bk. 6), *Works* 5.285.
[5] *Tetrachordon* (Matt. 19.9), *Works* 4.233.

reproach, must expound the letter of divine teachings by an 'unerring paraphrase of Christian love and charity';[1] and poets can in no other way justify the beauties and ornaments of their style than by dedicating their 'industry and art' to the great ends of society.[2] In the ordinary affairs of life, in politics, in philosophy, and in art, Milton exacts clarity and nobility of design, and opposes the common tendency to condone aimlessness and to interpret form as something independent of function.

In nothing is Milton's regard for certainty of purpose better illustrated than in his attitude toward his own life, a life so ordered in conscious accordance with a correct method that it may well be looked upon as in itself a work of art, 'a true poem.' From his boyhood, he knew but one ambition; his intentions and motives were defined; he was to be student and poet, that is, in the most exalted sense of the word, teacher. For this career he needed learning, and with a single mind and an inspired heart he set about its acquisition. Every step of his prodigious intellectual activity he challenged by some such query as the '*Ad quid venisti, Bernarde?*' of the great Benedictine, and every step he could have justified as definitely carrying him nearer to fulness of knowledge. Of the power of learning, and the sacredness of its end, he spoke with something of Dante's grandeur and something of Sidney's grace, and with the same positiveness that had brought their diverse minds into momentary agreement. Dante, the mediaeval thinker, had taught that the good of the intellect was to be realized in the contemplation of God. Sidney, the Elizabethan pattern of courtesy, had written: 'This purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judgment, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we call learning, under what name soever it come forth, or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of.'[1] Milton, as it were, echoes both: 'The end of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection.'[2] From this ideal of learning sprang the conception of a particular task which should give an animating purpose to his life.

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[1] *Tetrachordon* (Matt. 19.9), *Works* 4.245.

[2] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.144-145.

The particular task is described in *The Reason of Church-Government Urged against Prelaty.* There Milton announces his office in the dissemination of re-creative learning. The favorable reception of his early poetry by the members of the Italian academies, together with an 'inward prompting,' had brought him to conclude that he might 'perhaps leave something so written to aftertimes as they should not willingly let it die'; and he adds:

> I applied myself to that resolution which Ariosto followed against the persuasion of Bembo, to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adornment of my native tongue; not to make verbal curiosities the end—that were a toilsome vanity—but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother dialect. That what the greatest and choicest

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[1] *An Apology for Poetry*, in *Eliz. Crit. Essays* 1.160–161.

[2] *Education, Works* 4.381.

> wits of Athens, Rome, or modern Italy, and those Hebrews of old, did for their country, I, in my proportion, with this over and above of being a Christian, might do for mine.[1]

To the accomplishment of this undertaking no one of Milton's writings was unrelated. The prose works were but lesser and cruder contributions to the lofty design that culminated in the universalized teaching and high argument of the epics. Whether Milton expounded a wise programme of education, vindicated the honor of his people, espoused the cause of a free press, or defended the ways of God to men, he was faithful to one aim, and unremitting in his effort to give to his countrymen the best that throughout a life of studious concentration he had found for himself.

Thus far we have noted only the simplest bearing of Milton's belief in the identity of form and function—that is, its bearing upon his opinion and conduct, or upon what we might call his philosophy of life; and we have seen little more than that, like all men of orderly mind, he recognized the importance of motive, and of precision and steadfastness of purpose. Yet this discovery, ordinary and inevitable as it appears, has value because of the common tendency to consider genius irresponsible, and to associate its products with eccentricity. Let us next examine a development of the principle which more obviously affects the articles of Milton's aesthetic creed, and more deeply stamps the quality of his poetic gift.

For a creative artist the correspondence between inner spirit and tangible manifestation is the measure of the perfection in form. In Milton's prose, scattered passages touch upon this correspondence. Take first his definition of

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[1] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.144–145.

'gravity' in *A Treatise on Christian Doctrine*: 'Gravity consists in an habitual self-government of speech and action, with a dignity of look and manner, befitting a man of holiness and probity.'[1] Compare the lines in *The Second Defence of the People of England* in which Milton says he has never 'disgraced beauty of sentiment by deformity of conduct,'[2] and his words two years later to Emeric Bigot: 'If I have written anything well, I should wish my mind and character to be correspondent.'[3] The latter two passages may be recalled when we come to Milton on the ideal poet; for although his delineation owes much to humanism, it is not the less a direct outgrowth of his theory of form.

From the following quotations it is clear that Milton's disdain of churchly ritual is nothing else than his disdain of all deception, and in particular his scorn of that violation of the law of form called hypocrisy:

> The very act of prayer and thanksgiving, with those free and unimposed expressions which from a sincere heart unbidden come into the outward gesture, is the greatest decency that can be imagined, which to dress up and garnish with a devised bravery abolished in the Law, and disclaimed by the Gospel, adds nothing but a deformed ugliness.[4]
>
> But what do we suffer misshapen and enormous Prelatism, as we do, thus to blanch and varnish her deformities with the fair colors, as before of martyrdom, so now of Episcopacy?[5]
>
> We do injuriously in thinking to taste better the pure evangelic manna by seasoning our mouths with the tainted scraps and fragments of an unknown table; and searching among the verminous and polluted

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[1] *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 2, chap. 13), trans. by Sumner, 2.410.

[2] *2 Defence*, trans. by Fellowes, 6.400 (*Works* 6.286).

[3] *Epist. Fam.* 21, trans. by Hall, p. 86 (*Works* 7.399).

[4] *An Apology, Works* 3.316.

[5] *Reformation* (Bk.1), *Works* 3.11.

> rags dropped overworn from the toiling shoulders of Time, with these deformedly to quilt and interlace the entire, the spotless and undecaying, robe of Truth.[1]

Finally we cite three passages of special interest in connection with our inquiry into the nature of Milton's artistic theory. In *Eikonoclastes* he writes:

> Wholesome matter and good desires rightly conceived in the heart, wholesome words will follow of themselves.[2]

In *An Apology against a Pamphlet:*

> True eloquence I find to be none but the serious and hearty love of truth; and that whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others, when such a man would speak, his words (by what I can express), like so many nimble and airy servitors, trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their places.[3]

And lastly, in *A Defence of the People of England*[4] he couples 'frivolousness of matter' with 'redundancy of words,' and expresses a determination to shun them as one fault.

These three passages on language, the medium of poetry, bring us back to the artist's attitude toward the law of form, and we need go only a little farther to perceive in Milton a guiding faith, ultimately Platonic, which leads him constantly and fearlessly to look beyond the seen to the unseen, and without hesitation to associate outer beauty or ugliness with an inner counterpart. Spenser's belief, with all its implications for the poet,

> For of the soule the bodie forme doth take,
> For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make,[5]

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[1] *Episcopacy, Works* 3.81.
[2] *Eikonoclastes* (16), *Works* 3.455.
[3] *An Apology, Works* 3.322.
[4] *1 Defence* (Preface), *Works* 8.1.
[5] *An Hymn in Honor of Beauty* 132–133.

was Milton's also, and nowhere does it find loftier expression than in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained.* But before we look for it there, let us note a lowly prose passage in which it imparts an unstoical venom to his abuse. In *The Second Defence of the People of England,* Milton thus refers to the appearance of his enemy More: 'I have been informed that it is most insignificant and contemptible, a perfect mirror of the worthlessness of your character and the malevolence of your heart.'[1] Contrast now those other lines of Spenser:

> For all that faire is, is by nature good;
> That is a signe to know the gentle blood.[2]

Such correspondence, such proof of gentle blood, of an erect spirit, of a noble motive, or of their lack, reveal the law by which these poets worked. Yet both were compelled to admit apparent contradictions. Milton acknowledged that many a great man was 'slight and contemptible to see to';[3] Spenser, that many a 'gentle mynde' dwelt in a deformed tabernacle.[4] Of the two, it is Spenser who is more likely to concede that the law has been violated, and to offer some explanation,[5] whereas Milton occasionally forces the letter, and seeks to prove the contradictions only seeming. As he reasons, what looks like inconsistency may at times be explained by the blindness of man's discernment, 'dimmed with prejudice and custom.'[6] In *Paradise Lost,* for example, Adam concludes that woman, as exemplified in Eve, whom he later calls ' a fair defect of nature,'[1] has had bestowed upon her

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[1] *2 Defence,* trans. by Fellowes, 6.381 (*Works* 6.267).

[2] Spenser, *An Hymn in Honor of Beauty* 139–140.

[3] *Areopagitica, Works* 4.446.

[4] *An Hymn in Honor of Beauty* 141–142.

[5] *Ibid.* 141–161.

[6] Support for the idea that the blindness of man, rather than the errors of Nature, will explain many supposed failures of the law of correspondence may, without undue strain, be read from the context of the phrase quoted above from the *Areopagitica.*

> Too much of ornament, in outward show
> Elaborate, of inward less exact.[2]

Pausing only to suggest that Adam's premise needs scrutiny, we observe what is of more immediate importance, Milton's instinct to vindicate the law of form. According to his argument, judgment and perception in this instance are at fault. To the discriminating eye, Eve is inferior to man in body as well as mind; compared with Adam, she less resembles 'His image who made both'; and her beauty would be rated as falling short of perfection as every mere 'outside' falls short, were not Wisdom 'discountenanced,' as Adam avers, or dismissed, as Raphael amends, in discourse with her. Further, we recall that in *Paradise Lost* 10.872 Adam, after the temptation, again finds Eve's outward form misleading because 'too heavenly.' Here Adam's wisdom is thoroughly discountenanced by anger; and, Raphael not being near to clear his vision, Adam can do no more than denounce Eve's beauty as a 'hellish falsehood.' Finally, in *Samson Agonistes* the Chorus proves incompetent to solve the problem of woman's beauty, and with a resigned perplexity, puts the following question:

> Is it for that such outward ornament
> Was lavished on their sex, that inward gifts
> Were left for haste unfinished, judgment scant,
> Capacity not raised to apprehend
> Or value what is best
> In choice, but oftest to affect the wrong?[3]

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[1] *P. L.* 10. 891–892.
[2] *P. L.* 8.538–539.
[3] *S. A.* 1025–1030.

Sometimes denying, and sometimes explaining, a disproportion between inner and outer comeliness, Milton yet preserves his own concept of beauty from compromise. Its nature is distinctly revealed by contrast with the feeble and vicious suggestion put into the mouth of Satan when he attempts to beguile the heart of Christ. Satan, we note, illustrates the extreme of specious argument and fallacy in judgment. In this case he realizes the futility of an effort to entice Christ with the lust of the flesh, but does not realize the hollowness of his own notion of beauty:

> For Beauty stands
> In the admiration only of weak minds
> Led captive; cease to admire, and all her plumes
> Fall flat, and shrink into a trivial toy,
> At every sudden slighting quite abashed.[1]

Thus he reasons, making of beauty a kind of crust which has no spiritual counterpart or content, and which collapses when the support of admiration and flattery is withdrawn. And here we may quote certain lines from Spenser which for Milton certainly would express the complete denial of Satan's argument:

> How vainely then doe ydle wits invent
> That Beautie is nought else but mixture made
> Of colours faire and goodly temp'rament
> Of pure complexions, that shall quickly fade
> And passe away, like to a sommers shade,
> Or that it is but comely composition
> Of parts well measurd, with meet disposition!

. . . . . .

[1] *P. R.* 2. 220–224.

But ah! beleeve me, there is more then so,
That workes such wonders in the minds of men.
I, that have often prov'd, too well it know;
And who so list the like assayes to ken
Shall find by tryall, and confesse it then,
That Beautie is not, as fond men misdeeme,
An outward shew of things that onely seeme.[1]

When, in his poetry, Milton touches upon imperfection, deformity, or ugliness, the same theory lies behind his words. This is evident in the colloquy between Michael and Adam, as together they look upon the suffering and sickness that have resulted from Eve's transgression in the Garden:

'Can thus
The image of God in man, created once
So goodly and erect, though faulty since,
To such unsightly sufferings be debased
Under inhuman pains? Why should not Man,
Retaining still divine similitude
In part, from such deformities be free,
And for his Maker's image' sake exempt?'
'Their Maker's image,' answered Michael, 'then
Forsook them, when themselves they vilified
To serve ungoverned appetite, and took
His image whom they served—a brutish vice,
Inductive mainly to the sin of Eve.
Therefore so abject is their punishment,
Disfiguring not God's likeness, but their own;
Or, if his likeness, by themselves defaced,
While they pervert pure Nature's healthful rules
To loathsome sickness—worthily, since they
God's image did not reverence in themselves.'[2]

[1] *An Hymn in Honor of Beauty* 64–70, 85–91.
[2] *P. L.* 11. 504–522. Cf. Spenser, *Faerie Queene* 2. 9. 1.

The vivid and awful picture in the Tenth Book of *Paradise Lost* of the devastation wrought by sin more exhaustively treats the same theme. In the Argument, the poet briefly foreshadows such great events as follow, merely saying that God 'commands his angels to make several alterations in the Heavens and Elements.' It remains for the astonished reader to find that these 'alterations' are nothing less than the wrack and upheaval—the *deforming*—of the world. Sin and Death have arrived in Paradise, and Sin has made known her purpose to infect man's thoughts, his words, his looks, his actions:

> Which the Almighty seeing,
> From His transcendent seat the Saints among,
> To those bright Orders uttered thus his voice:
> 'See with what heat these dogs of Hell advance
> To waste and havoc yonder World, which I
> So fair and good created, and had still
> Kept in that state, had not the folly of Man
> Let in these wasteful furies, who impute
> Folly to me (so doth the Prince of Hell
> And his adherents), that with so much ease
> I suffer them to enter and possess
> A place so heavenly, and, conniving, seem
> To gratify my scornful enemies,
> That laugh, as if, transported with some fit
> Of passion, I to them had quitted all,
> At random yielded up to their misrule;
> And know not that I called and drew them thither,
> My Hell-hounds, to lick up the draff and filth
> Which Man's polluting sin with taint hath shed
> On what was pure; till, crammed and gorged, nigh burst
> With sucked and glutted offal, at one sling
> Of thy victorious arm, well-pleasing Son,
> Both Sin and Death, and yawning Grave, at last
> Through Chaos hurled, obstruct the mouth of Hell

> For ever, and seal up his ravenous jaws.
> Then Heaven and Earth, renewed, shall be made pure
> To sanctity that shall receive no stain:
> Till then the Curse pronounced on both precedes.'[1]

As the curse is executed the very heavens are changed; the sun is taught to 'affect the earth with cold and heat scarce tolerable'; the planets to exert a 'noxious efficacy,' and the fixed stars an 'influence malignant'; the winds are bidden to confound with bluster, and the thunder to roll with terror:

> These changes in the heavens, though slow, produced
> Like change on sea and land—sidereal blast,
> Vapor, and mist, and exhalation hot,
> Corrupt and pestilent.
>
> . . . . . . . . .
>
> Thus began
> Outrage from lifeless things; but Discord first,
> Daughter of Sin, among the irrational
> Death introduced through fierce antipathy.
> Beast now with beast 'gan war, and fowl with fowl,
> And fish with fish. To graze the herb all leaving
> Devoured each other; nor stood much in awe
> Of Man, but fled him, or with countenance grim
> Glared on him passing.[2]

Sin had, indeed, done no less than deform the entire world-order; in Milton's philosophy the substitution of an evil for a good spirit could not have resulted otherwise.

Clearly Milton's concept of form related itself to all his impressions, and bore upon all his judgments. Yet his customary reliance upon it in no way dulled its suggestiveness. The concept explained and enriched life as he saw it immediately about him, or contemplated it through the eyes of the past. It ennobled beauty, and furnished the touchstone for virtue; and it pitilessly laid bare crudity and affectation, and searched out pretension, hypocrisy, and guilt. In short, it so animated his deepest imagination that in his poetry, as perhaps the sagest thing he could teach, it lies at the heart of his message.

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[1] *P. L.* 10. 613–640.

[2] *P. L.* 10. 692–695, 706–714. This passage may be contrasted with descriptions of the Garden of Eden before the spirit of evil had perverted the beneficent ends of nature.

At the opening of Book Three in *Paradise Lost* the concept receives consummate expression. Here 'form' no longer is the purpose that shapes, or the soul that inhabits, this or that particular body, but the spirit that, having its effluence from God, produces His created universe. Availing himself of the associations of Biblical usage, and probably inspired by the Neoplatonists and Dante, Milton now calls this essential spirit *light*, and identifies light, form, and essence. In order to understand the poetical renderings of the idea, and perhaps even in order to recognize them, the following passages from *Paradise Lost*, the first already mentioned as opening Book Three, the second appearing toward its close, and the last from Book Seven, cannot be too thoughtfully read:

> Hail, holy Light, offspring of Heaven first-born!
> Or of the Eternal coeternal beam
> May I express thee unblamed? since God is light,
> And never but in unapproachèd light
> Dwelt from eternity—dwelt then in thee,
> Bright effluence of bright essence increate!
> Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream,
> Whose fountain who shall tell? Before the Sun,
> Before the Heavens, thou wert, and at the voice
> Of God, as with a mantle, didst invest
> The rising world of waters dark and deep,
> Won from the void and formless Infinite.[1]

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[1] *P. L.* 3. 1–12.

I saw when, at His word, the formless mass,
This World's material mold, came to a heap:
Confusion heard His voice, and wild Uproar
Stood ruled, stood vast Infinitude confined;
Till, at His second bidding, Darkness fled,
Light shone, and order from disorder sprung.
Swift to their several quarters hasted then
The cumbrous elements—Earth, Flood, Air, Fire—
And this ethereal quintessence of Heaven
Flew upward, spirited with various forms,
That rolled orbicular, and turned to stars
Numberless.[1]

'Let there be light!' said God; and forthwith light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure
Sprung from the deep.[2]

To the imagination of Milton, then, light is the manifestation of the heavenly spirit, the first of things, the quintessence pure, the bright effluence of bright essence increate. Since light emanates from Divinity, it carries with it wisdom and holiness; and the progress of all forms toward perfection is made evident by their capacity to receive light. In these lines, with their vivid directness and beauty, we have the classic expression of Milton's belief in the interrelation of essential and visible condition.

The appropriate words in a concordance of Milton's poetry will show how often terms relating to light and darkness appear in his verse. Yet it is not the frequency of the words that is so remarkable. Other poets have loved light, as other concordances would show; but no one else, unless it is Saint John the divine, has put his love of light quite so completely into the service of an abstract concept. On this point let us compare Milton with Dante, to whom also light is the symbol of beauty and of all that partakes of Divinity. The *Divina Commedia* is full of references to light, as Dean Church has eloquently noted:

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[1] *P. L.* 3. 708–719.
[2] *P. L.* 7. 243–245.

> Light in general is his [Dante's] special and chosen source of poetic beauty. No poet that we know has shown such singular sensibility to its varied appearances—has shown that he felt it in itself the cause of a distinct and peculiar pleasure, delighting the eye apart from form, as music delights the ear apart from words, and capable, like music, of definite character, of endless variety, and infinite meanings....Light everywhere—in the sky and earth and sea, in the star, the flame, the lamp, the gem; broken in the water, reflected from the mirror, transmitted pure through the glass, or colored through the edge of the fractured emerald; dimmed in the mist, the halo, the deep water; streaming through the rent cloud, glowing in the coal, quivering in the lightning, flashing in the topaz and the ruby, veiled behind the pure alabaster, mellowed and clouding itself in the pearl; light contrasted with shadow—shading off and copying itself in the double rainbow, like voice and echo;...light in the human eye and face, displaying, figuring, and confounded with its expressions;...light from every source, and in all its shapes, illuminates, irradiates, gives its glory to the *Commedia*. The remembrance of our 'serene life' beneath the 'fair stars' keeps up continually the gloom of the *Inferno*. Light, such as we see it and recognize it, the light of morning and evening growing and fading, takes off from the unearthliness of the *Purgatorio*. ...And when he rises beyond the regions of earthly day, light, simple, unalloyed, unshadowed, eternal, lifts the creations of his thought above all affinity to time and matter; light never fails him, as the expression of the gradations of bliss.[1]

But though light is thus diffused throughout Dante's poem, his journey may, on the whole, be thought of as a steady progress from the darkness of Hell into the ever-increasing radiance of the Rose of Heaven. In the Empyrean he is surrounded with brightness, and Paradise first appears to him like a river of light whence issue living sparks, so that he knows that he is catching 'a ray reflected upon the summit of the First Moved which takes thence life and potency.'[1] At last he beholds the divine light itself, before which 'one becomes such that to turn from it for other spectacle it is impossible that one should ever consent; because the good which of the will is object is all assembled in it, and outside of it that is defective which there is perfect.'[2] Thus there is in Dante a constant advance toward light objectively considered, a constant observation of its reflection along the way, and a final and complete revelation of it as proceeding from God.

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[1] R. W. Church, *Dante and Other Essays*, pp. 163–165.

At first we may be struck by similarities in Dante's and Milton's treatment of light; but there is a difference, the more noteworthy for so much agreement. One illustration will show that Milton's concept of light was a pure outgrowth and a pure expression of his sense of form as Dante's was not: let us examine their respective delineations of utter moral depravity. The method of Dante is elaborate. He depicts Lucifer as a hideous and shaggy monster, with three faces, and large, flapping wings 'in form and texture like a bat's,' and with other visible symptoms of spiritual decay. But Milton, refusing to multiply distinctions, merely converts Satan from an angel of light to the Prince of Darkness, and thus by a negative process, that is positive and awful in view of what it denies, forms his personification of evil. Dante must reveal the spiritual corruption of Satan by various palpable imperfections; the loss of physical lustre is but one of many external signs. Milton needs no accumulation of effects; with inspired foresight, he chose to denote the greatest moral excellence and spiritual good by a single phenomenon with physical characteristics affording him all the opportunity he desires. He has only to withdraw light in order to have darkness supplant it, and by this darkness, with its varying intensity, he is able to represent corresponding degrees of deformity.

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[1] *Paradiso* 30. 106–108; trans by Butler.

[2] *Ibid.* 33. 100–105.

Since Milton's allusions to light, in the main, directly or indirectly express his theory of form, we find a new significance in much of the epic. Our interpretation gives added meaning to the entreaty of the poet for light in his darkness; to the radiant brightness with which his imagination clothes Heaven, and the perpetual gloom in which it shrouds Chaos and Hell; to that forfeit of splendor by which the rebellious angels, once the true 'Progenie of Light,' become the 'Sons of Darkness'; to the Father's promise of 'light after light' to those who heed the voice of conscience; to Satan's speech of defiance upon Mount Niphates; in fact, to a majority of the passages containing such words as *light, lustre, radiant, shining, dark, darkness, gloom,* and *night.* Let us end the chapter by considering the details in the story of Satan and his revolted legions that betoken the waning of their original brightness.

In the First Book of *Paradise Lost,* Satan, 'breaking the horrid silence' of the sombre regions into which he and his companions have been hurled, and puzzled by the darkened figure of Beelzebub, thus addresses him:

If thou beest he—but oh, how fallen! how changed
From him who, in the happy realms of light,
Clothed with transcendent brightness didst outshine
Myriads though bright![1]

Within a few lines Satan admits that he himself is 'changed in outward lustre'; but at once exhibits the sophistry, or deformity of intellect, that marks his utterances throughout the poem, and in 'high words,' having 'semblance of worth, not substance,' denies that any inward transformation accompanies the lessening of his outward splendor. The account of his appearance, toward the close of the same Book, depends for much of its effect, and for the simile that enriches it, upon the notion of his beclouded brilliance:

His form had yet not lost
All her original brightness, nor appeared
Less than Archangel ruined, and the excess
Of glory obscured: as when the sun new-risen
Looks through the horizontal misty air
Shorn of his beams, or, from behind the moon,
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
On half the nations, and with fear of change
Perplexes monarchs. Darkened so, yet shone
Above them all the Archangel: but his face
Deep scars of thunder had intrenched, and care
Sat on his faded cheek, but under brows
Of dauntless courage, and considerate pride
Waiting revenge.[2]

At Hell-Gate, the portress Sin recalls how Satan looked before the conspiracy in Heaven, and speaks of his

Countenance bright,
Then shining heavenly fair.[3]

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[1] *P. L.* 1. 84–87.
[2] *P. L.* 1. 591–604.
[3] *P. L.* 2. 756–757.

Later in his defiance of light, Satan mentally reverts to the 'bright eminence' for which he was created; and Milton, as frequently, follows the speech with some lines of contrast:

> Thus while he spake, each passion dimmed his face,
> Thrice changed with pale—ire, envy, and despair;
> Which marred his borrowed visage, and betrayed
> Him counterfeit, if any eye beheld;
> For heavenly minds from such distempers foul
> Are ever clear.[1]

Uriel, having witnessed Satan's behavior, and 'discerned his looks,' subsequently describes him to Gabriel as being 'foul obscured' with passion; and Gabriel is equally quick to notice that the splendor of the fiend is 'faded' and 'wan.' Zephon addresses the fallen angel as follows:

> Think not, revolted Spirit, thy shape the same,
> Or undiminished brightness, to be known
> As when thou stood'st in Heaven upright and pure.
> That glory then, when thou no more wast good,
> Departed from thee; and thou resemblest now
> Thy sin and place of doom obscure and foul.[2]

From this rebuke Satan perceives that his lustre is now 'visibly impaired,' but he does not so much bewail the 'lovely' shape of virtue that is gone, as lament that his transformation has become obvious. The Fourth Book ends with the flight of Satan from the presence of Gabriel; and with him, writes the poet, 'fled the shades of night.' In the Fifth Book, Raphael, recounting to Adam and Eve the revolt in Heaven, mentions both the high estate and influence of Satan among the angelic hosts, and their visible counterpart:

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[1] *P. L.* 4. 114–119.
[2] *P. L.* 4. 835–840.

> Great indeed
> His name, and high was his degree in Heaven;
> His countenance, as the morning-star that guides
> The starry flock, allured them.[1]

Raphael also repeats to Adam and Eve the command of God to His Son beginning,

> Effulgence of my glory, Son beloved,[2]

and concluding,

> Pursue these Sons of Darkness, drive them out
> From all Heaven's bounds, into the utter Deep.[3]

Again there is an effect of contrast, as the angel continues:

> He said, and on His Son with rays direct
> Shone full. He all his Father full expressed
> Ineffably into his face received.[4]

The Son promises to fulfil the divine dictate, and to

> rid Heaven of these rebelled,
> To their prepared ill mansion driven down,
> To chains of darkness.[5]

After man's overthrow has been accomplished, Satan simply is referred to as the 'Prince of Darkness'[6]; and now Milton's concept receives its final, possibly most imaginative, treatment. The Arch-fiend dispatches Sin and Death to Paradise under these commands:

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[1] *P. L.* 5. 703–706.
[2] *P. L.* 6. 680.
[2] *P. L.* 6. 715–716.
[4] *P. L.* 6. 719–721.
[5] *P. L.* 6. 737–739.
[6] *P. L.* 10. 383.

There dwell and reign in bliss; thence on the Earth
Dominion exercise and in the air,
Chiefly on Man, sole lord of all declared;
Him first make sure your thrall, and lastly kill.
My substitutes I send ye, and create
Plenipotent on Earth, of matchless might
Issuing from me. On your joint vigor now
My hold of this new kingdom all depends,
Through Sin to Death exposed by my exploit.
If your joint power prevail, the affairs of Hell
No detriment need fear; go and be strong.[1]

Thus commissioned, Sin and Death depart, and so informed are they with the evil effluence from the Prince of Darkness that at their passage,

the blasted stars looked wan,
And planets, planet-struck, real eclipse
Then suffered.[2]

As light had emanated from good, darkness now issues from evil; Satan diffuses through his followers a darkness that assails and dims even the centres of light. Milton's thought has reached its complete development. The angel, whose countenance had been as the morning-star, now has power to dull with his baleful influence the very planets themselves, and the brightness that he presently assumes before his companions is the final revelation of his guile. Hitherto, whatever light shone from Satan's outer form testified to some remnants in him of original nobility; now light itself has become the instrument of his wickedness. He shines indeed, but his glory is 'permissive,' and his glitter false. With miserable and dangerous substitutes for a true radiance he gilds over his inward darkness, and makes a lie of the symbol of truth. After a final look at the brilliance of the loyal angels, who in Book Eleven are called the 'Sons of Light,' Milton abandons this theme of the poem. By the terms of his hypothesis he could in no way either so logically or so impressively have depicted deformity as by the gradual encroachment and final triumph of darkness where light had been.

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[1] *P. L.* 10. 399–409.
[2] *P. L.* 10. 412–414.

Consciously or unconsciously aided by a lifelong habit of thought, Milton has given complete and unified expression to his theory of form. In shaping his expression he has been guided by his propensity to adjudge an object according to its establishment in some end (the phrase is suggested by Milton himself[1]); by all that, through interchanging analysis and synthesis, he has learned of the identity of form and function; by his unerring perception of spirit in substance; and by his observations of the interaction of soul and body. But the concept has acquired more than completeness and unity; in *Paradise Lost* it has reached poetic sublimity. Its vigor and its epic dimensions are the sign and proof of its influence upon Milton's aesthetic theory; so that, impossible as it is to know in what literary type he might have chosen to enunciate that theory, one thing is certain—he would have developed it from some theme, however phrased and accented, that proclaimed the high function of all fine art, and called for sensitiveness, clear vision, and lofty purpose in every artist.

[1] See *Tetrachordon* (Deut. 24. 1, 2), *Works* 4.183: 'All ordinances are established in their end.'

# CHAPTER II

## MILTON AND THE FINE ARTS OTHER THAN POETRY

Except as regards poetry, and to a certain extent music, there is little in Milton's writings to show his conception of any one of the fine arts. Yet one thing stands to reason: an emphasis upon function must have characterized all his criticism. Whatever his exactions and estimates, we cannot suppose them undetermined. He never would condone aimlessness in the arts, or view without scorn their reduction to so-called 'pure expression,' or tolerate the decadent standards of later generations that have praised 'art for art's sake.' But as he judged laws, and customs, and enterprises, by what they accomplished for humanity, so, being a great humanist, would he judge the arts.

The occurrences in Milton's poetry and prose of the word 'art' show his careful usage. Almost always an adjective or phrase saves the word from ambiguity—from its present loose acceptation. When used by Milton without qualification, the word 'art' (except in certain passages, of little import to us, where it denotes duplicity or deceit) generally refers to a skilful method of procedure toward whatever end, or stands in a conventional contrast with nature. At no time does it have a vague aesthetic connotation, or appear in the doubtful rôle of an adjective. Such a statement, that is, as 'he has adopted art as his profession,'[1] would have meant nothing to Milton, and the term 'art-product' would have seemed to him equally unintelligible. Yet he himself refers impartially and, as we shall see, with entire precision, to the art of the poet and the art of the smith, and bestows the title of 'neat-fingered artist' upon the cook, of 'gymnic artists' upon the tumblers and wrestlers in *Samson Agonistes*, and of 'Tuscan artist' upon Galileo. His coupling of the two nouns in the phrase, 'wild above rule or art,'[1] brings out his basic meaning, which is amplified in the lines,

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[1] See Webster's *Modern English Dictionary, Unabridged,* s.v. 'Art' 6.

> But with such gardening tools as art yet rude,
> Guiltless of fire, had formed,[2]

and in Mammon's assurance to his fallen peers that they lack neither skill nor art to raise 'Magnificence.'[3] Finally, a glance at the term in the following connections should clarify its sense in Milton: he speaks, for example, of art and strength, art and argument, art and mysteries; of the art of divinity and (by implication) of the art of Christian religion; of theologic art and episcopal art; of the art of teaching, operating under methodical laws; of the art of policy much 'cankered in her principles'; of regal arts, the art of war, and the art of tyranny; of art and simony, and the calumnious art of counterfeited truth; of the arts of women, of amorous arts and sophisticated arts; of the magician's art, the art of alchemy, the land-pilot's art, the herdsman's art, the art of hawking, the art of flying[4] (though not by that name), the curious art of weaving; and, finally, of the art to be industriously idle.[1] Fine art, a term apparently of eighteenth-century invention,[2] he does not use, supplying its place by such phrases as 'liberal arts,' and 'arts that polish life,' and by combinations like 'arts and eloquence,' 'spacious art and high knowledge,' and 'civility of manners, arts, and arms.'

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[1] *P. L.* 5.297.

[2] *P. L.* 9.391–392.

[3] *P. L.* 2.272–273.

[4] See the story of Elmer, the venturesome and 'strangely aspiring' monk of the eleventh century, who 'made and fitted wings to his hands and feet,' and fluttered down from the top of a tower 'to the maiming of all his limbs.' Whereupon, with dauntlessness like that of his twentieth-century descendants, he was 'so conceited of his art that he attributed the cause of his fall to the want of a tail.' *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 6), *Works* 5.293.

Clearly, then, to Milton every adept is an artist, whether in the exercise of his craft he concocts a broth, charts the heavens, or writes an epic; because behind all three exhibitions of power lies a definite regulative theory. Milton no doubt recognizes a difference between useful and fine art, or between mere dexterity and artistic productivity; but for him that difference does not lie in the presence or absence of technical principles. As he conceives them, the fine arts, equally with all others, must be governed by laws, and subject to method. In other words, Milton certainly accepts the view of Aristotle: 'As . . . there is no art which is not a rationally productive state of mind, nor any such state of mind which is not an art, it follows that art must be the same as a productive state of mind under the guidance of true reason.'[3] This concept, together with Milton's emphasis upon function, must be borne in mind as a supplement to the fragmentary data that follow.

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[1] The following usage is curious, and not, so far as I know, duplicated in Milton: 'But he [Plautius] sending first the Germans, whose custom was, armed as they were, to swim with ease the strongest current, commands them to strike especially at the horses, whereby the chariots, wherein consisted their chief *art of fight*, became unserviceable.' *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 5.49.

[2] In the year 1603, 'fine arts' had been casually employed by Ben Jonson to indicate the expedient mannerisms of the Court, the same to which Spenser (*Colin Clout* 701-702) had referred in the lines,

> A filed toung furnisht with termes of art,
> No art of schoole, but courtiers schoolery.

[3] *Eth. Nic.* 6.4, trans. by Welldon, p. 182.

To begin with the lesser fine arts, his references to carving in cedar, marble, ivory, and gold, and to the embellishment lent by gold and precious stones, show that Milton was not unobservant of fine handicraft; yet he rarely mentions small decorative objects. Unlike Spenser, he is not particularly attracted by the work of 'guileful goldsmiths' and 'cunning craftsmen'; the dissimilarity is typical in the descriptions of Mercilla's throne in the *Faerie Queene* and of Satan's throne in *Paradise Lost.* Spenser's sovereign sat

> Upon a throne of gold full bright and sheene,
> Adorned all with gemmes of endlesse price,
> As either might for wealth have gotten bene,
> Or could be framed by workmans rare device;
> And all embost with lions and with flour-delice.
>
> All over her a cloth of state was spred,
> Not of rich tissew, nor of cloth of gold,
> Nor of ought else that may be richest red,
> But like a cloud, as likest may be told,
> That her brode spreading wings did wyde unfold;
> Whose skirts were bordred with bright sunny beams,
> Glistring like gold, amongst the plights enrold,
> And here and there shooting forth silver streames,
> Mongst which crept litle angels through the glittering gleames.[1]

Milton thus enthrones the Monarch of Hell:

> High on a throne of royal state, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
> Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
> Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
> Satan exalted sat.[2]

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[1] *Faerie Queene* 5. 9. 27–28.
[2] *P. L.* 2. 1–5.

Should we explain the unlikeness in these passages by a corresponding unlikeness in the interests of the two poets, or by a difference in the respective literary types?[1] In any case the difference does not come from a sense of restriction on Milton's part. He did not feel himself shut off from the use of concrete imagery by his supernatural subject. On the contrary, he says that his task is to represent supernatural phenomena in familiar terms—to measure

> Things in Heaven by things on Earth;[2]

and several times implies that part of his endeavor is to find earthly parallels to heavenly magnificence.[3]

Nor do the minute descriptions

> Of workes with loome, with needle, and with quill,

that embellish Spenser's poetry, find parallels in Milton. Tapestry is spoken of in *Comus* (line 324), and in *Elegia Sexta* (line 39), in each case without comment. The only other references, in *Eikonoclastes*[4] and in the tenth chapter of *A Defence of the People of England*,[5] point more to Milton's classicism (both being reminiscent of Virgil) than to an interest in the art of ornamental weaving. As for simpler, more domestic, types of needlework, serving a twofold end of use and beauty, it is not Milton, but Comus, who says:

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[1] Spenser's frequent allusions to examples of fine workmanship possibly reflect his own taste less than the substance of his reading. The romantic poetry both of the Middle Ages and of the Renaissance abounds in appreciations of the skill of handicraftsmen, which may, in their turn, be reminiscent of the classical descriptions of helmets and shields and drinking-cups. Compare Virgil's praise of the carving of Alcimedon, *Eclogue* 3. 37 ff.

[2] *P. L.* 6. 893.

[3] *P. L.* 6. 297–301; cf. *P. L.* 1. 768 ff., 10. 306 ff.

[4] *Works* 3. 513.

[5] *Works* 8. 223.

> Course complexions
> And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply
> The sampler.[1]

The poet's own opinion may be more fairly expressed in his commendation of Edward the Confessor for being 'nothing puffed up with the costly robes he wore, which his queen with curious art had woven for him in gold.'[2] Yet who shall say how much Milton intended to praise the king for an indifference to 'curious art,' and how much for his superiority to cloth of gold? Spenser, with his admiration for the exercise of 'the fine needle and nyce thread,' and his feeling that so often

> Did the workmanship farre passe the cost,[3]

would have quickly seen that if modesty entered in at all, it could do so only in the person of the Queen.

Of painting Milton says almost nothing. His only reference in the poetry[4] denies that the so-called shading-pencil can reproduce the sparkling portal of Heaven; but the subject is manifestly unfit for such reproduction, and the remark has little importance. In *Animadversions upon the*

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[1] *Comus* 749–751.

[2] *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 6), *Works* 5. 291–292.

[3] *Faerie Queene* 4. 4. 15. See above, p. 31, n. 1. This valuation of an object according to the workmanship expended upon it is also to be found in the romances. It appears in Tasso; and for an example from the literature of mediaeval romance we may quote these couplets from the *Cligés* of Chrétien de Troyes (lines 1539–1542):

> Mout iert buene et riche la cope:
> Et qui a voir dire n'açope,
> Plus la devroit l'an tenir chiere
> Por l'uevere que por la matiere.

[4] *P. L.* 3. 509.

*Remonstrant's Defence,*[1] painting is, by contrast with the art of divinity, rated as 'almost mechanic.' In *Eikonoclastes*[2] the bad painter, obliged to label his picture in order 'to tell passengers what shape it is,' helps Milton to a simile. Only twice more in the prose is painting mentioned; in neither case does what is said pertinently bear upon the art.[3] This paucity of reference astonishes the critics. Coleridge comments upon it as follows:

> It is very remarkable that in no part of his writings does Milton take any notice of the great painters of Italy, nor, indeed, of painting as an art; while every other page breathes his love and taste for music. Yet it is curious that in one passage in the *Paradise Lost* Milton has certainly copied the fresco of the Creation in the Sistine Chapel at Rome. I mean those lines:
>
> Now half appeared  
> The tawny lion, pawing to get free  
> His hinder parts—then springs as broke from bonds,  
> And rampant shakes his brinded mane, etc.;
>
> an image which the necessities of the painter justified, but which was wholly unworthy, in my judgment, of the enlarged powers of the poet. Adam, bending over the sleeping Eve, in the *Paradise Lost,* and Dalilah approaching Samson, in the *Agonistes,* are the only two proper pictures that I remember in Milton.[4]

Among other pictures that seem equally graphic is that of the dismay of Adam at Eve's recital upon returning from the Tree of Knowledge:

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[1] *Works* 3.234. Here architecture and painting are coupled.

[2] *Works* 3. 510.

[3] See below, p. 37

[4] Coleridge, *Table Talk,* Aug. 7, 1832, *Works,* ed. by Shedd, 6.409–410.

> Thus Eve with countenance blithe, her story told;
> But in her cheek distemper flushing glowed.
> On the other side, Adam, soon as he heard
> The fatal trespass done by Eve, amazed,
> Astonied stood and blank, while horror chill
> Ran through his veins, and all his joints relaxed.
> From his slack hand the garland wreathed for Eve
> Down dropped, and all the faded roses shed.
> Speechless he stood and pale.[1]

A different sort of picture, and one that suggests, not Botticelli, but a modern painter, may be found in the *Nativity Hymn*, stanza 20, where the lines,

> With flower-inwoven tresses torn
> The nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn,

offer a scene of contrast for Corot's 'Dance of the Nymphs.' Farther on, in stanza 26, the yellow-skirted fays who

> Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze,

suggest the pictorial fancy and selection of some one like Moritz von Schwind; and few of any temperament have a visualizing power too inert to call up some image of the outline and pose of

> Laughter holding both his sides,[2]

and

> On the tawny sands and shelves
> Trip the pert fairies and the dapper elves;[3]

or of the color and gesture of

[1] *P. L.* 9.886–894.
[2] *L'All.* 32.
[3] *Comus* 117–118.

> the flowery-kirtled Naiades
> Culling their potent herbs,[1]

and

> At last he rose, and twitched his mantle blue.[2]

Finally, still fewer can be blind to the line and composition, the glow and pageantry, of

> All in a moment through the gloom were seen
> Ten thousand banners rise into the air,
> With orient colors waving: with them rose
> A forest huge of spears: and thronging helms
> Appeared, and serried shields in thick array
> Of depth immeasurable.[3]

Yet the pictorial phrases and passages in Milton, it must be allowed, bear but indirectly on his interest in painting.

Of the builder's art there is more to say. A fondness for architecture and a familiarity with architectural detail may be traced in Milton's poetry. In *L'Allegro* he sets his stage with towers and battlements, smoking cottage-chimneys and rose-framed cottage-windows. In *Il Penseroso* he turns to the quiet loveliness of cloistered walks or dim-lit aisles, and the shadowed beauty of vaulted roofs and massive pillars. In *Paradise Lost*, an enthusiasm for architectural magnificence, and at least a vocabulary of architectural technique, produce the embellished and splendid passage:

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[1] *Comus* 254–255.
[2] *Lycidas* 192.
[3] *P. L.* 1.544–549.

Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet—
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid
With golden architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven:[1]
The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon,
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equaled in all their glories, to enshrine
Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury. The ascending pile
Stood fixed her stately height; and straight the doors,
Opening their brazen folds, discover, wide
Within, her ample spaces, o'er the smooth
And level pavement. From the archèd roof
Pendent by subtle magic many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With naphtha and asphaltus, yielded light
As from a sky. The hasty multitude
Admiring entered; and the work some praise,
And some the architect.[2]

In *Paradise Regained*,[3] through the mouth of the Tempter, Milton describes in some detail the distant imperial palace at Rome, and speaks of the porches, theatres, baths, aqueducts, statues, trophies, and triumphal arches that adorned the city. His interest, however, scarcely goes beyond the enumeration. To sculpture, for example, there is no other important allusion in the verse, and the two that we find in the prose are primarily introduced for the sake of comparison. One[1] draws attention to the waste and refuse necessarily left by the sculptor's chisel; the other[2] is a chance-allusion to the critic of statuary and painting. This indifference to much of the builder's and the sculptor's work, though here and there partially counteracted in Milton, and though in some measure due to his subject-matter, is of course his by right of birth and calling. As Englishman, and as poet, he may be expected to turn elsewhere for aesthetic enjoyment.[3]

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[1] Cf. Addison, *Spectator*, No. 297, Feb. 9, 1712; see *Addison on P. L.*, ed. by Cook, pp. 40–41: 'The last fault which I shall take notice of, in Milton's style, is the frequent use of what the learned call technical words, or terms of art. . . . When he is upon building, he mentions "Doric pillars," "pilasters," "cornice," "frieze," "architrave."' And compare below, pp. 47-48.

[2] *P. L.* 1.710–732.

[3] *P. R.* 4.31 ff.

So far our research comes to this: Milton's references to small objects of artistic workmanship, to painting, tapestry, sculpture, and architecture, are inconsiderable. Did we not know the principles concerned, the references would be negligible. As it is, they have a curious attraction, suggesting more than they actually impart; they are interesting as are all isolated fragments if something is known of the framework into which they fitted, or the design from which they scattered. But when we turn to music, we are no longer put off with odds and ends. There are signs of musical appreciation everywhere in Milton's work, and the cursory reader must discern something of the poet's joy in the 'sphere-born harmonious sister' of his own art.[4]

[1] Cf. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 1. chap. 7), *Works* 3.133; and see below p. 64.

[2] *An Apology, Works* 3.308; and see below p. 50.

[3] Spenser mentions the sculptor but once: *Faerie Queene* 4.10.40.

[4] For a scholarly and enthusiastic study of Milton's conception of music, and his grasp of its technique, see *Milton's Knowledge of Music, its Sources and its Significance in his Works*, by Sigmund Gottfried Spaeth (Princeton, the University Library, 1913). Dr. Spaeth has covered the ground so well that little remains to be said; were it not for the sake of completeness the present essay need here only recommend that his work be consulted. As it is, the discussion that follows in the

The abundant evidences in Milton of an intelligent love of music are augmented by his biographers; but, following the method of our inquiry, we shall for the most part keep to an examination of his own utterances. Of such an examination the first result is an immediate certainty, independent of all other proofs, that he had an uncommon fondness for music, and the second, a gradual perception that he had an equally uncommon grasp of its technique. But his response to the sensuous appeal of the fine arts concerns us less than his rational theory; and hence, where we can, we shall distinguish between the two, and devote ourselves principally to the latter.[1]

The references that may be construed as technical group themselves into four overlapping divisions. There are, first, allusions in the similes or examples with which Milton clarified an argument; secondly, musical terms, sometimes scientific, that appear both in passages on music and in metaphors; thirdly, occasional expressions showing an appreciation of trained musical proficiency as distinguished from untutored facility; and, fourthly, certain statements which, although not definitely technical, contribute most of all to our knowledge of Milton's theory, because they reveal his idea of the place and function of music. We shall consider these groups in reverse order.

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text is much less detailed than Dr. Spaeth's, and while it draws upon his book, and repeats some of his observations, it altogether lacks part of his material, notably that in his fourth chapter, on what he calls the metaphysical or mystical aspect of Milton's theory of music.

[1] An account of the poet's education in music, and of his emotional delight in music, is given by Dr. Spaeth in his second chapter.

In his early writings, Milton sometimes makes music the servant of poetry. Herein, were his attitude not conventional, he might seem to deny the existence of music as an independent art. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, it was a commonplace with writers of verse, when recalling their distant forefathers, Orpheus, Linus, and the rest, to share this ancestry with the writers of music; they discounted, for the time being, all music not purely vocal, or intended to accompany the voice. The historical bond between the two arts was so close, and the traditions of Orpheus and his brethren so zealously appropriated by each as its mythical heirloom, that, but for the poet's manifest advantage in claiming superiority, the two might have been completely identified. Even from Spenser we do not infer that music is a distinct art, but Elizabethan England knew it as such, and by Milton's day to put music altogether in the service of poetry was a mere conceit—obviously for the poet a charming one. In the spirit of this tradition the youthful Milton begs Euphrosyne for

Soft Lydian airs
Married to immortal verse,[1]

or, implying a no less vital bond between music and poetry, addresses them as,

Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse.[2]

But he best exemplified the convention in the half-impetuous, half-wistful, challenge to his music-loving father:

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[1] *L'All.* 136–137.
[2] *Solemn Music* 1–2.

> And what avails, at last, tune without voice,
> Devoid of matter? Such may suit perhaps
> The rural dance, but such was n'er the song
> Of Orpheus, whom the streams stood still to hear,
> And the oaks followed. Not by chords alone
> Well-touched, but by resistless accents, more
> To sympathetic tears the ghosts themselves
> He moved; these praises to his verse he owes.[1]

Milton's tendency to speak of poetry as 'song'[1] is explicable in many instances on grounds of rhythm or euphony, but, over and above that, is less in the vein of conceit than of tradition. It is fostered by a kind of filial reminiscence of the days when all poetry came into actual expression through the mouth of bard and minstrel—when, in fact, not only poet and singer, but poet, singer, and annalist were one.[2] The modern reader nevertheless, though mindful of the historical color of the term 'song', may take it as a pure synonym for poetry or verse.

In finding our way to more sober expressions of Milton's conception of the art of music we return, however, for a moment to the vein of conceit. His early verse possibly is more extravagant in ascribing supernatural powers to the musician than that of any other great modern poet. When the Lady in Comus sings, 'the attendant spirit' takes in

> Strains that might create a soul
> Under the ribs of Death.[4]

And the enchanter himself, who has often known the songs of his mother Circe and the Sirens to quiet the waves of Scylla and win soft applause from Charybdis, in his transport over the Lady's voice sees the very darkness of night break into a smile. Yet the Lady's power is equaled or surpassed by the shepherd's; for with his 'soft pipe and smooth-dittied song' Thyrsis not only stills the winds, and hushes the waving woods, but delays the running streams, and sweetens the flowers of most pervasive fragrance. In the more earnest tribute to the sublime power of music, spoken by the genius of the wood in *Arcades*,[1] Milton revives philosophical and allegorical rather than mythological lore, and takes us to the threshold of his half-mystical, half-ethical conception of that heavenly music, which, inaudible to men, holds the universe in harmony. But this threshold, since it leads beyond aesthetics to philosophy, we shall not cross.

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[1] *Ad Patrem* 59–66, trans. by Cowper, p. 606.

[2] See Spaeth, pp. 51 ff.

[3] Cf. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 1), *Works* 5.26; 'Blegabredus next succeeding, is recorded to have excelled all before him in the art of music; opportunely had he but left us one song of his 20 predecessors' doings.'

[4] *Comus* 561–562.

We now may look, however, for something less ethereal and fantastic. In the tractate *Of Education*, Milton, coupling the words 'profit' and 'delight,' which play a rôle in aesthetic criticism since Horace, makes the only direct statement of his concept of music. Its office in his ideal school for an English youth he thus describes:

> The interim of unsweating themselves regularly, and convenient rest before meat, may both with profit and delight be taken up in recreating and composing their travailed spirits with the solemn and divine harmonies of music heard or learnt; either while the skilful organist plies his grave and fancied descant in lofty fugues, or the whole symphony with artful and unimaginable touches adorn and grace the well-studied chords of some choice composer; sometimes the lute or soft organ-stop waiting on elegant voices, either to religious, martial, or civil ditties; which, if wise men and prophets be not extremely out, have

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[1] *Arcades* 68–73.

> a great power over dispositions and manners, to smooth and make them gentle from rustic harshness and distempered passions. The like also would not be unexpedient after meat, to assist and cherish nature in her first concoction, and send their minds back to study in good tune and satisfaction.[1]

For us the interest of this passage lies in its ascription to the musical art of both a practical and an aesthetic value. Harmony is characterized as divine, but to beautiful music in its service to humanity (as is suggested in Milton's concluding sentence) are assigned some prosaic tasks. Yet the tractate may give a misleading prominence to the homely and less dramatic use of music in human culture. If so, the emphasis must be corrected, and the suggestions of the tractate supplemented by those made in other places; for, while demanding that music should both profit and delight, Milton, even when writing without hyperboles, recognized a rich diversity in its effects, and admitted among them many so transporting that he might have cried with Dryden:

> What passion cannot music raise and quell?[2]

Thus, when 'the Powers militant that stood for Heaven' are ordered to move forward against the enemy angels, they go in silent legions, their ears attentive to

> the sound
> Of instrumental harmony that breathed
> Heroic ardor to adventurous deeds.[3]

Or when Satan has first gently raised the fainted courage of his hosts by high (and hollow) words, and then incited them to frenzy through the martial sounds of clarion and trumpet, he steadies, orders, and inspires them with music of another sort:

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[1] *Education, Works* 4.391. And see John Aubrey, *Collections for the Life of Milton*, in *Of Education* [etc.], ed. by Lockwood, p. xli: 'He made his nephews songsters and sing from the time they were with him.'

[2] *Song for St. Cecilia's Day* 24.

[3] *P. L.* 6.64–66.

> Anon they move
> In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood[1]
> Of flutes and soft recorders—such as raised
> To height of noblest temper heroes old
> Arming to battle, and instead of rage
> Deliberate valor breathed, firm, and unmoved
> With dread of death to flight or foul retreat;
> Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage
> With solemn touches troubled thoughts, and chase
> Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
> From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they,
> Breathing united force with fixed thought,
> Moved on in silence to soft pipes that charmed
> Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil.[2]

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[1] Dr. Spaeth, in dealing with the Hellenic elements in Milton's theory of music, comments on his interest in 'the ancient "modes" or keys of the diatonic scale,' of which the most important were the Dorian, the Phrygian, and the Lydian. To each of these Plato ascribes an *ethos* or particular emotional value. It is this *ethos* of the Greek modes, 'their effect upon man, their power to induce joy or sadness, heroic valor or effeminate languor,' which appeared particularly to interest Milton. See Spaeth, pp. 67–68. Earlier in his book Dr. Spaeth points out how finely and consistently Milton discriminates between the effects of various instruments as dependent upon the quality of their sound. Every tone 'has for him [Milton] a fixed and definite function. . . . Certain instruments fit certain situations, produce certain effects. They cannot be indiscriminately changed about. . . . To him no variation in function was possible without an accompanying variation of quality. If an instrument can produce different qualities of tone, as is the case with the pipe family, then it can likewise exercise different functions. If its quality and effect are constant then its function must also be constant.' See Spaeth, pp. 38–39. And, for a similar point of view in regard to the effects of various types of music and of various kinds of instruments, compare Dryden, *Alexander's Feast, or the Power of Music*, and *A Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, especially stanzas 4–8.

[2] *P. L.* 1.549–562.

The attitude reflected in these passages is confident and liberal. Milton looks upon music as a great moving and determining force in life. Its immediate appeal is sensuous, but its ultimate touch, on the one hand calming, reassuring, healing, on the other rousing, stimulating, emboldening, is upon the vital interests of man's spirit. This interpretation is prevailingly Greek; in Plato and Aristotle lies its confirmation. Milton adopted their general concept of the function of music, and into his specific notion of its humanizing power and service introduced nothing discordant. He believed that music had a purgative virtue, calmed perplexity, banished anguish, doubt, fear, sorrow, and pain, charmed its devotees, shut them away from 'eating cares,' dispelled their weariness, kindled fire in the heart of warriors, and incited them to heroic deeds; that it was as much the gift of 'heart-easing mirth' as of 'divinest melancholy'; that it lifted men to Heaven, and brought Heaven down to men. Because of all these things, it appeared to him no less imperative than to Plato that men 'practise music,' and recognize in its strains the echoes of the universal harmony.

If such was Milton's idea of music, every word that he said of it has significance for this essay. A poet who cared less for the art might speak less precisely—might, for example, in an instance like the following, be content to satisfy his metre either with 'artful' or with 'artless.' Not so Milton. When he writes,

> To hear the lute well touched, or *artful* voice
> Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air,[1]

the import relates the words to the 'wanton heed' and 'giddy cunning' of the 'melting voice' in *L'Allegro*, to the artful strains of the shepherd in *Comus*, and to the 'artful and unimaginable touches' mentioned in the tractate *Of Education.*[1] Such phrases are explicit proof of Milton's notion that music required more of a proficient than that he be genially receptive toward his endowment; they show that, in his eyes, poet and musician, and indeed all artists, alike win their way through laborious effort, to a ready and graceful manipulation of their media.[2]

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[1] *Sonnet* 17.11–12.

As might be expected, the terminology of this cherished art came freely into Milton's diction. Words that to-day have lost musical significance retained for him either full musical value or strong musical suggestion. If his mental associations with terms like 'jar,' 'jangle,' 'noise,' and 'chime,' are taken into account, certain passages surprise us with a richer meaning. A few illustrations will suffice. The gates of Heaven emit harmony as they move,[3] but 'the infernal doors' of Hell fly open

> With impetuous recoil and jarring sound.[4]

In the ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, the thrilling sound that holds Heaven and Earth in happy union is spoken of as composed in part of a divinely-warbled voice, in part of a stringed 'noise' that accompanied it.. To Milton's imagination the 'jangling noise of words' that arose from the builders of the Tower of Babel was more than loud and rasping. It smote the ear, but distressed it, too, with a discordant resonance, comparable to that described in the lines,

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[1] See above, p. 41.

[2] See *Milton's Knowledge of Music*, by William Henry Hadow, in *Milton Memorial Lectures*, ed. by Percy W. Ames 1908, p. 19: 'It will be observed that one of Milton's favorite epithets for music is "artful"—*kunstmässig*. He is no believer in the supersition, not wholly dead even at the present day, that music is a matter of some remote and unaccountable inspiration which needs no intellectual gift and no training in craftsmanship. On this point he well knew what he was saying.'

[3] *P. L.* 7.206.

[4] *P. L.* 2. 880. Compare the 'jarring atoms,' in the first stanza of Dryden's *Song for St. Cecilia's Day*, under which Nature lay until 'the tuneful voice' was heard that called forth universal harmony.

> Arms on armor clashing brayed
> Horrible discord, and the madding wheels
> Of brazen chariots raged; dire was the noise of conflict.[1]

The sense that Milton attaches to 'chime,' though not uncommon in poetry, is rare outside the poets. We seldom think of any object as 'chiming' except bells. But Milton has 'chiming strings'[2] and the 'melodious chime . . . of harp and organ,'[3] as Cowper has 'the chimes of tinkling rills,' and Wordsworth 'the chiming hounds' or 'the chiming Tweed.' For the incidental though always correct usage of more precise terms like *diapason*, *descant*, *number*, *proportion*, *close*, *concent*, *symphony*, and *harmony*, the reader is referred to Dr. Spaeth's Glossary and Index.

In passages where sound is not involved, Milton's free introduction of musical terms is again likely to hinder our understanding of his thought. Samson, lamenting his folly cries:

> Tell me, friends,
> Am I not sung and proverbed for a fool
> In every street? Do they not say, 'How well
> Are come upon him his deserts'? Yet why?
> Immeasurable strength they might behold
> In me; of wisdom, nothing more than mean.
> This with the other should, at least, have paired;
> These two, proportioned ill, drove me transverse.[4]

[1] *P. L.* 6.209–211.
[2] *P. R.* 2.363.
[3] *P. L.* 11.558–559.
[4] *S. A.* 202–209.

The last sentence will not be clear until the technical words, 'proportioned' and 'transverse' are explained and compared with others—for example, those in *At a Solemn Music,*[1] or those in the Eleventh Book of *Paradise Lost* which read:

> His volant touch,
> Instinct through all proportions low and high,
> Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue.[2]

Similarly, a technical explanation is needed for a passage like that in *Tetrachordon,*[3] where an undue insistence upon the letter of the New Testament is spoken of as sounding 'disproportion to the whole Gospel.'[4]

In all likelihood Milton realized the danger of his facility with technical words. Indeed, in this very matter of musical terminology he made an effort to simplify his usage. Some of the examples given by Professor Lockwood in her article on Milton's *Corrections to the Minor Poems*[5] are pertinent. 'In *Solemn Music* 3,' we learn, '"Mixe your choise chords" is changed to "wed your divine sounds," and in a line later entirely omitted, "chromatik jarres" is erased for "ill sounding"; *Comus* . . . 242, "hold a counterpoint" [becomes] "give resounding grace."' We are reminded again of 'the last fault . . . in Milton's style' which Addison noted in his essay on the defects of *Paradise Lost.* Without doubt music was one of the 'several other arts and sciences' besides navigation, architecture, and astronomy, that frequently tempted the poet to substitute 'what the learned call technical words' for such 'easy language as may be understood by ordinary readers.'[1]

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[1] See especially lines 17–23.

[2] *P. L.* 11.557–559. See Hadow, *Milton's Knowledge of Music,* pp. 19, 20 (cited above p. 45, n. 2). The author calls these lines 'the best description of a fugue ever written.' After noting the correctness of the technical terms, he says: 'And what makes them the more remarkable is the date at which they appeared. The first scientific treatise on fugue was that of Fux; the first, supreme, master of fugal writing was John Sebastian Bach. When *Paradise Lost* was printed, Fux was a child of three, and Sebastian Bach was not yet born. The artists from whom Milton gained his knowledge must have been the first pioneers—the two Gabrielis at Venice, Frescobaldi, and his pupil Frohberger at Rome. With the two latter he was probably in personal contact; in any case we may wonder at the insight which enabled him to state with such truth and justice a highly technical form that was still in its infancy.' Hadow says that Frohberger was studying with Frescobaldi when Milton visited Rome in 1638.

[3] This title, *Tetrachordon,* itself proves Milton's familiarity with rare musical terms; he had in mind the earliest Greek harmony of four parts.

[4] *Tetrachordon* (Matt. 19.9), *Works* 4.233.

[5] *Mod. Lang. Notes* 25.201. Or see Cooper, *Methods and Aims in the Study of Literature,* pp. 68–69.

A majority of the musical metaphors in Milton are not very complex, and merely show how easily, if not instinctively, his mind when in search of expression borrowed words, phrases, or ideas suited to figurative employment, from the sister art of poetry. In *An Apology against a Pamphlet,* for example, he introduces a digression from his stern argument thus: 'That I may, after this harsh discord, touch upon a smoother string.'[2] In *The Reason of Church-Government* he resigns himself to the burdensome duty of censure, sometimes imposed by the possession of wisdom, as follows: 'But when God commands to take the trumpet and blow a dolorous or a jarring blast, it lies not in man's will what he shall conceal.[3] And in the *Remonstrant's Defence,* being a little less watchful for 'easy language,' he writes:

> We shall adhere close to the Scriptures of God which He hath left us as the just and adequate measure of truth, fitted and proportioned to the diligent study, memory, and use of every faithful man, whose

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[1] See above p. 36, n. 1.
[2] *Works* 3.298.
[3] *Works* 3.140.

> every part consenting and making up the harmonious symmetry of complete instruction is able to set out to us a perfect man of God.[1]

Finally, the poet's technical knowledge is shown in various illustrative passages. In *An Apology against a Pamphlet,* the interrupted theme of discourse above-mentioned is resumed with this transition:

> Thus far I have digressed, Readers, from my former subject; but into such a path as I doubt not ye will agree with me to be much fairer and more delightful than the roadway I was in. And how to break off suddenly into those jarring notes which this confuter hath set me, I must be wary, unless I can provide against offending the ear, as some musicians are wont skilfully to fall out of one key into another without breach of harmony.[2]

Again, in the *Remonstrant's Defence,* the answerer thus justifies an antipathy to stereotyped forms of prayer:

> As for the words, it is more to be feared lest the same continually should make them careless or sleepy, than that variety on the same known subject should distract; variety (as both music and rhetoric teacheth us) erects and rouses an auditory, like the masterful running over many chords and divisions; whereas, if men should ever be thumming [? thrumming] the drone of one plain-song, it would be a dull opiate to the most wakeful attention.[3]

These passages comprise the chief evidence in Milton's works of an intimate knowledge of music. Though they do not give his theory an entirely substantial shape, many details being absent, they do provide for an outline, and, within that outline, for the development of several important topics. At least they show that Milton's concept of the aesthetic function of the art was joined to a scientific

[1] *Works* 3.215.
[2] *Works* 3.304.
[3] *Works* 3.209.

understanding of its structure, and that he must have looked upon music as a potentially perfect and lofty form of emotional expression.

The question of Milton's ability as a musical performer we shall not discuss.[1] His biographers tell us that he had a large measure of skill, and since no autobiographical statement on the point is forthcoming, we should be obliged to turn to them—contrary to our plan. Milton himself pointedly warns us against inferring practical skill from theoretical knowledge. As explicitly as Horace,[2] he distinguishes between a knowledge of the fine arts in which technique is familiar as theory, and a knowledge in which it is applied in practice. 'None can judge of a painter or statuary,' says Milton, 'but he who is an artist, that is either in the practic, or the theory,—which is often separated from the practic, and judges learnedly without it.'[3] Elsewhere he says: 'It will not be denied that he may be the competent judge of a neat picture, or elegant poem, that cannot limn the like.'[4] But even without the testimony of the biographers we should find it impossible to believe that in Milton's case this distinction need be made. The fervor of his references to music must have sprung in part from his love of the art as a means for exquisite though transient utterance of his own emotion.

Aside from poetry, the only one of the fine arts upon which it can be said that Milton had any obvious influence, was the art of landscape-gardening. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, landscape-gardeners abandoned extreme artificiality for extreme realism. Instead of clipping the evergreens in the formal parks to resemble 'green chests on poles' they set out dead trees to mimic nature. Milton could not have foreseen, and would have been astonished to know, that his name was to be associated with this turn to realism. Yet his connection with the movement is an established fact, and the manner of it has a particular interest; for it bears out a theory, familiar to students of Italian literary criticism, of which convincing illustrations are not always readily found. Scaliger in his *Poetics*, led by his admiration of Virgil, asserts that the true poet is nothing less than a god who creates a nature of his own.[1] For this second nature, the critic explains, its human maker, by meticulous care and through powerful inspiration, secures universality, and a beauty so nearly perfect that it becomes superior to reality. Thus the 'ideas' of things in Virgil provide, according to Scaliger, more just and moving examples for lesser imitators than does nature itself, and consequently are to be preferred to all other patterns or images. Now Milton's relation to the development of landscape-gardening seems to be a concrete instance in which a theory like that of Scaliger was realized. Not that England shortly after Milton's day was to be dotted with copies of the Terrestrial Paradise, nor yet that professional designers of gardens, like Kent and Brown, were to say to each other: 'Come, let us imitate the Fourth Book of *Paradise Lost.*' But the history of the art does show that passages in Milton gave his century timely encouragement, and perhaps definite suggestions, for a marked change in method. If he was not, like Scaliger's ideal poet, consulted for models (in landscape), he was thought of as one whose imagination anticipated a new purpose. In either case his is the literary name most prominently linked with this transition in the art.[1]

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[1] See above, p. 38, n. 1.

[2] Cf. *Ars Poetica* 306:

> Munus et officium nil scribens ipse docebo.

Trans. by Howes:

> While others practise, precept I'll impart,
> And, though no artist, prove a friend to art.

[3] *An Apology*, *Works* 3.308.

[4] *Animadversions*, *Works* 3.230.

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[1] *Poetics* 1. 1, trans. by Padelford, p. 8.

But Milton's right to the foremost place of influence in this movement has not gone unchallenged. Leigh Hunt championed Spenser, insisting with reason that the modern taste, usually said to have originated in *Paradise Lost*, was distinctly foreshadowed in the *Faerie Queene*.[2] Others have made claims for Bacon, or, less confidently, have drawn attention to signs of rebellion, against the demand for artificiality, in La Fontaine. Still others believe that the first literary sponsors of the new landscape-gardening were Pope and Addison. In *An Essay on Design in Gardening*,[3] George Mason writes—and justly in so far as Bacon's influence was conscious, and Milton's unconscious: 'Lord Bacon was the first who attempted to reform our method.' Byron says: 'It is worthy of remark that after all this outcry about "in-door nature" and "artificial images," Pope was the principal inventor of that boast of the English, modern gardening. He divides this honor with Milton.'[4] Dr. Burgh wishes to dispose of the question, in his notes on William Mason's *English Garden*, by calling

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[1] For a discussion, and a collection of references, bearing upon Milton's connection with the development of the art of landscape-gardening, see John W. Good, *Studies in the Milton Tradition*, Appendix I, pp. 268–273 (University of Illinois, 1913).

[2] Cf. particularly *Faerie Queene* 2.12. 42, 50, 58, 59.

[3] P. 26.

[4] *Works of Lord Byron, Letters and Journals*, ed. by Prothero, 5.586.

Bacon the prophet, Milton the herald, and Addison, Pope, and Kent the champions of the new movement. Moreover, Milton's title of founder of the new school has been flatly contested outside his own land. Italian critics have bestowed the distinction upon one whose merit Milton would have been slow to question. Scolari, in the notes to his study of *Paradise Lost*,[1] comments upon certain passages in the Fourth Book substantially as follows. For a long time it was believed that the Miltonic description of Eden first suggested the so-called English or irregular gardens. But, in the opinion of Ippolito Pindemonte, it was Tasso who first described such a place, in the enchanted garden of Armida; moreover, according to Professor Malacarne, Italy even has the honor of first laying out such a garden—the old *Parco* of Charles Emanuel I of Savoy near Turin. Scolari scrupulously adds that, though the English may not assume the credit of inventing the *giardini irregalari*, they at least put the inventions of the Italians to the greatest profit. But, whatever the rights in the case, the honor popularly remains with Milton, secured to him against all rivals by the beauty of his language and the authority of his utterance.

His early poems reflect the gentle contrasts of rural England, and testify to an urbane delight in 'hedge-row elms,' 'arched walks,' 'trim gardens,' 'smooth-shaven greens,' and 'tufted trees.' They indicate no youthful revolt against the lavish adornment of nature deplored by Spenser and Bacon, nor yet do they evince any real preference of it. But by the time of the epics Milton's taste is formed, and in them, particularly in *Paradise Lost*, are the passages that account for his unintentional dictatorship. We need not rehearse the details of these descriptions. Every one will remember the loveliness of the Garden as it lay within the green enclosures of Eden and above the wild thickets and tall forests of the 'shaggy hill,' with fruit-trees overtopping its verdurous walls, 'crisped brooks' rippling under deep shade or winding through bright meadows, pastoral lawns and level downs and flower-filled valleys on one side, and on another, the more darkly romantic scenery of grottos, caves, and waterfalls. Here art was said to have no share. There were no beds or curious knots of flowers easily matched in tarts—as Bacon might have said—but a natural profusion of blossoms, crowded in the sunshine of open fields or sheltered deep in woodlands. The streams ran with mazy error; the groves flourished like some sweet wilderness; indeed,

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[1] Filippo Scolari, *Saggio di Critica sul Paradiso Perduto di Giovanni Milton*, p. 139.

> Nature here
> Wantoned as in her prime, and played at will
> Her virgin fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
> Wild above rule or art, enormous bliss.[1]

Such were the lines that stirred attention and stimulated new ideas in that guild of craftsmen whose medium was, broadly speaking, all the world of out-of-doors.

'One man,' says Walpole, meditating on this and other passages—'one great man we had, on whom nor education nor custom could impose their prejudices; who . . . judged that the mistaken and fantastic ornaments he had seen in gardens were unworthy of the almighty hand that planted the delights of Paradise. He seems with the prophetic eye of taste . . . to have conceived, to have foreseen, modern gardening.'[1] And true it is that while, in the Miltonic passages denying the presence of art, its merely curious touches, its toys and designs and topiary deformities, are absent, certain artistic devices soon to come into vogue are conspicuously present; and Walpole's fears lest posterity fail to realize that the epic antedated 'the introduction of modern gardening' by about fifty years, and so defraud the poet of his glory, seem not wholly unwarranted. Arrangements for variety and contrast, manifestations of a fondness for antithesis, that taste which, to quote Leigh Hunt, yearns 'toward stronger forms of the picturesque,' and advocates 'a departure from the smoothness of beauty in order to enhance it,' the deliberate dedication of certain spots to brightness and gaiety, and of others to haunted shadows and the uses of a pleasing melancholy—all these features marked and beautified Eden as they later marked and beautified Hagley and Stourhead, Stowe and Blenheim, and the parks and gardens eagerly visited, and in some cases minutely described, by Sir John Evelyn.

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[1] *P. L.* 5.294–297.

Of course, Walpole's naïve desire that Milton's ideas on formal gardening be accepted as underived finds obstacles. For example, in the all-important matter of contrast the forerunners of the poet gave hints and suggestions that he must have known. In Tasso, a favorite author with Milton, we have a passage which so perfectly accords in spirit with the compositions of landscape in the Fourth Book of *Paradise Lost* that Milton might have appended it to them as an engraver sometimes sets a remarque in the margin of his picture. 'The sight of deserts and the awful ruggedness of mountains,' says Tasso, 'is pleasing after the gentleness of lakes and gardens; indeed, I say that variety is commendable as long as it does not pass into confusion.'[1]

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[1] Walpole, *On Modern Gardening*, in George Vertue's *Ancedotes of Painting* 4.248–249.

One might oppose Walpole to the extent of thinking that Milton profited even by the caution of his predecessor; for, under Milton's pen, variety never does pass into confusion, though at times it is achieved by setting confusion itself over against ordered loveliness or unperplexed simplicity. So the steep wilderness with hairy sides and rank-growing thickets is thrown around the beautiful garden, or the unscalable cliffs and jagged crags press close upon the alabaster pathway that winds up, clear and unbroken, to the eastern gate of Paradise.

Once aware that material in Milton bore upon their art, the writers on landscape studied him for all that he might yield. Thus George Mason, in the essay already referred to,[2] cited *Paradise Regained*[3] to illustrate the value of contrast in landscape, and to show that one of the properest ways of attending to it is in the internal arrangement of a wood. Or he rejoiced that the contemplative poet had found congenial many 'a delightful gloom,' and so had helped to foster scenes 'intended to excite the pleasures of melancholy'; or in opposition to Walpole, who derived satisfaction from asserting that Milton had no models, he indicated the 'divine scenery' of Milton's favorite ancients.

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[1] Tasso, *Del Poema Eroico*, Bk. 3, p. 89: 'La vista de' deserti, e l'orrore, e la rigidezza delle alpi ci piace dopo l'amenità dei laghi, et de'giardini: dico bene che la varietà è lodevole sino a quel termine, che non passi in confusione.'

[2] *An Essay on Design in Gardening*, pp. 70-71; see above, p. 52.

[3] 2.289 ff.

Sieveking, in his anthology,[1] declared, with symptoms of ill humor, that Milton so carefully 'hedged' and 'trimmed' his garden that it was claimed in turn by partisans of rival schools[2] as representing their respective views. And William Mason in English[3] and Jacques Delille in French[4] were moved to celebrate Milton's rôle in long and, it must be confessed, inferior, poems. But though all these men wrote sincerely, most of them wrote poorly, and one is not tempted to quote their observations at greater length. Fortunately, the fact of their writing is more important than the quality of it, and if Milton exerted the influence they ascribe to him, one can easily consult for oneself the passages from which it must have sprung.

Nevertheless by this material one must estimate Milton's connection with the art of gardening. Imperfectly as these historians of landscape deal with his lines, they bear witness that he kindled rather than reflected a new freedom in their art, and determined rather than recorded one of the most important phases of its evolution. Nor were their conclusions undiscerning. If Milton protested against artificiality, he did not therefore, in their eyes, demand an unsystematic and unquestioning 'return to Nature.' Gardeners still had something more to do than to select and enclose favorable portions of ground; they were to continue as adept workers in a beautiful craft. And in order to reach this truth the commentators had done more than read the

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[1] A. F. Sieveking, *Gardens Ancient and Modern*, Historical Epilogue, p. 316.

[2] Walpole and Bagehot are mentioned. The reference in Bagehot I have not been able to trace.

[3] Mason, *The English Garden, a Poem in Four Books*, ed. by Burgh (York, 1783), 1. 448 ff.

[4] Delille, *Les Jardins* 1.284 ff., 604 ff.

Fourth Book of the epic, where the garden is 'ordained by God,' and where the interference of 'nice art' is expressly denied. They had observed the light thrown upon Milton's attitude by such occasional phrases as,

> Nature's own work it seemed (Nature taught Art);

and they had perceived in the poet himself a selective process that converted his descriptive passages into models for imitation.

To summarize, it would appear that Milton, without being a landscape-artist in theory or practice, held up a mirror to those who were, whereby he quickened latent tendencies and confirmed uncertain impulses toward the change in taste with which his name is associated. To him we are perhaps indebted to-day, if for no particular lawns, vistas, and prospects, for some of our pleasure in all loveliness of this kind wherever found.

Except in respect to music, this chapter is as complete as the material in Milton seems to allow. If broader generalization is not feasible, at least one may say that music, architecture, and landscape-gardening meant much to Milton, and that he knew much about them. It does not follow that to a mind so endowed and so sensitive other avenues of aesthetic enjoyment were closed, or other fields of technique unfamiliar. His own poetic art, including within it all others, must have been to him full of voices which, with varying cogency, urged upon him, as upon 'the ideal spectator,' their respective sources of profit and delight. If his uttered response was sometimes faint, it was never random or unwilling.

# CHAPTER III

## GENERAL ASPECTS OF MILTON'S THEORY OF POETRY

Milton's *obiter dicta* on poetry are as scattered, and almost as fragmentary, as his references to the other fine arts, but are more copious, and more obviously part of a complete though unenunciated theory. The relation of this theory to Aristotle one immediately guesses; its reflection of the Italian commentators on Aristotle one ultimately perceives.

In a discussion of this theory an important matter must be dealt with at the outset. An effort to formulate the laws and higher mechanics of the fine arts, especially of poetry, will often encounter the 'enthusiastic' protest that artists, like Paracelsus and the bird, pursue a 'trackless way,' and like them 'arrive'—in other words, that 'art [is] nothing worth, and genius all in all.'[1] As Sir Joshua Reynolds puts it, there is something more 'captivating and liberal' in one who represents painting 'as a kind of inspiration, . . . a gift bestowed upon peculiar favorites at their birth,' than in one who coldly examines into the actual means and methods of artists.[2] So with poetry. Why work out a body of critical doctrine, say the sceptical, when poetry is all a matter of fine frenzy?

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[1] Horace, *Ars Poetica* 295–296—Howes' translation.

[2] *Sixth Discourse.*

We must therefore ask, What was Milton's attitude in the time-honored dispute between art and genius? To what extent was he 'Aristotelian'? To what extent 'Platonic'? Would he have embodied his views on poetry in a treatise or in a myth? What ratio would he assign to art and nature in explaining the creation of beauty? How far did he attribute poetry to original endowment and fitful inspiration, and how far to such an endowment trained to habitual response? Though the dependence, already noted, of Milton upon Aristotle provides a general answer to these questions, yet the wisest writers on poetry, even while assigning the chief importance either to art or to inspiration—that is even while revealing a greater sympathy with Aristotle or with Plato—have come to some middle ground that seemed to allow an adjustment. Our attempt must be to discover Milton's adjustment. But as we have identified his definition of art with Aristotle's,[1] and are searching for his rational artistic principles, we may consider his tributes to inspiration, spontaneity, and inborn aptitude to be the concessive or modifying elements in his theory.

As rigorous theorists have admitted the necessity of an innate gift—Aristotle, his disciples in the Renaissance, even Boileau, 'the lawgiver of the French Parnassus'—so also did Milton. He deems it 'a genial power of nature,' essential, though not in itself adequate to creation. He sees its importance, while recognizing the dictates of a rational aesthetic theory; his reasoning is in logical agreement with his whole conception of art. He reverenced workmanship, and insisted upon method; inevitably also he admitted the fact of inspiration.

[1] Above, p. 29.

In a rough classification determined by general attitude, there has been no doubt where our poet would stand. For the plastic quality of Milton's endowment, Addison placed him in the second class of great geniuses[1]—in a distinguished fellowship of the law-abiding, with 'those that have formed themselves by rules, and submitted the greatness of their natural talents to the corrections and the restraints of art.'[2] And a modern editor of Addison, Professor Cook, writes: 'That Milton would not have declined to be judged by these rules [the rules of epic poetry] is evident from a passage of his tractate *Of Education*, in which he speaks of the teaching of "those organic arts, which enable men to discourse and write perspicuously, elegantly, and according to the fittest style of lofty, mean, or lowly." '[3] Finally, Milton himself makes his own attitude clear. In effect he asserts that neither nature alone, nor art alone, can produce a great poet, but that to an original gift there must be joined a capacity for the 'learned pains' which to 'any gentle apprehension' are easily distinguishable from 'unlearned drudgery,'[4] After recording the favorable reception of his poems in Italy by the members of the private academies, he writes:

> I began thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labor and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life), joined with the strong propensity of nature,[5] I might perhaps

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[1] Addison explains that the classification was thus numbered 'only for distinction's sake,' and that it bore no relation to degrees of superiority.

[2] *Spectator*. No. 160, Sept. 3, 1711; See *Addison on P. L.*, ed. by Cook, p. 159.

[3] *Addison on P. L.*, ed. by Cook, Notes, p. 162.

[4] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.149.

[5] Another phrase for the 'genial power of nature,' mentioned on p. 60.

> leave something so written to aftertimes, as they should not willingly let it die . . . I applied myself . . . to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adornment of my native tongue.[1]

Shortly after, he again refers to the two qualities, endowment and diligence, that unite to give him poetical power.[2] And a few pages later, he prophesies that the great poem, in which the work of his life is to culminate, will be achieved 'by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases'; to which, he continues, 'must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs.' Thus Milton explicitly states his belief in the study and technical training whereby the creative instinct receives its perfect value, and develops into genius.

In recognizing that the poetical impulse is natural, and in attributing perfection in the art to care and industry in the gifted, Milton agrees with Aristotle and Horace,[3] and with the Italian theorists who followed them. But had he been silent on these points, we still should place him where he places himself. We recall his ascription of every 'sociable perfection' in this life to 'discipline,'[4] and know he would not cast poetry adrift to chance.

[1] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.144–145.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 149.

[3] See Horace, *Ars Poetica* 408–418, and passages in the Italian theorists—as Minturno, *L'Arte Poetica*, Bk. 1, p. 37, where the expectation of perfect workmanship in man taught only by nature is compared to a search for leafy trees and succulent grasses in the Ethiopian desert.

[4] Cf. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 1), *Works* 3. 97–98.

If this conclusion seems to be contradicted by Milton's personal references to easily inspired and 'unpremeditated verse,'[1] or to the

> thoughts, that voluntary move
> Harmonious numbers,[2]

one need only recall his earlier didactic utterances. Or, it may suffice, in dealing with these references, and with the 'prompt eloquence' that 'in prose or numerous verse' flowed 'unmeditated' from the lips of Adam and Eve,[3] to cite Castelvetro.[4] Poets, he states, do not versify spontaneously; if they do, why mention spontaneity as to their credit in the special instances of Antipater Sidoneus and Licinius Archias? Why indeed? Or if Milton's praise of Shakespeare's 'easy numbers,[5] is troublesome, let the student reflect that in the preceding line art is characterized as 'slow-endeavoring,' and that in the manner of the sonneteer Milton crowns the dramatist with extravagant honors in which some higher truth overshadows the inaccuracy. Or, finally, our cue may be taken from Milton himself; for, as we shall see, he declares that a surfeit of poetry or passion may for the moment transcend care for literal fact.[6]

To resume: Milton admits no essential distinction between the real and the artificial in creative work. He approves the use of artifice when to the ordinary beholder it is least apparent, or least desirable; and he thinks conscious art no menace to sincerity or even to passion. Thus, in his

[1] *P. L.* 9.23–24.
[2] *P. L.* 3.37–38.
[3] *P. L.* 5.144 ff.
[4] *Poetica d'Aristotele*, p. 68.
[5] *On Shakespeare* 10.
[6] See below, pp. 75.

description of the 'mystical dance' of the angels, he speaks of

> mazes intricate,
> Eccentric, intervolved, yet regular;
> Then most, when most irregular they seem;[1]

and again, he calls the songs in the Law and Prophets superior, not in 'divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition,' to 'all the kinds of lyric poesy.'[2] For him, deliberation and niceness account for 'the curious touches'[3] of any art. 'In things artificial,' he writes, 'seldom any elegance is wrought without a superfluous waste and refuse in the transaction. No marble statue can be politely carved, no fair edifice built, without as much rubbish and sweeping.'[4] Thus he suggests the lines of Horace:

> Nec virtute foret clarisve potentius armis,
> Quam lingua Latium, si non offenderet unum
> Quemque poetarum limae labor et mora. Vos, O
> Pompilius sanguis, carmen reprehendite, quod non
> Multa dies et multa litura coercuit atque
> Praesectum decies non castigavit ad unguem.[5]

But we are not done with the questions that open the chapter, and have still to note further modifications of the theorist's point of view. Milton's positive emphasis upon the necessity of art and the value of effort is qualified in various ways. For example, he invokes the Heavenly Muse, and he refers to sources or times of pure inspiration. In his youth, the spring,[1] that season of his lasting delight, moves him as in an 'ecstatic trance'; and again, he writes with youthful animation to his Italian friend, Charles Diodati:

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[1] *P. L.* 5.622–624.

[2] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.146.

[3] *Ibid.* 3.143.

[4] *Ibid.* 3.133.

[5] *Ars Poetica* 289–294, trans. by Howes:

> Nor would the name of Latium stand renowned
> On martial more than on Parnassian ground,
> Were not our every bard so loth the while
> To brook the pause and labor of the file.
> Praise you no piece, my noble friends, but what
> Has been through many an hour and many a blot
> Corrected, ten times poised in judgment's scale,
> And smoothed like sculpture to the critic nail!

> Think not that wine against good verse offends;
> The Muse and Bacchus have been always friends,
> Nor Phoebus blushes sometimes to be found
> With ivy, rather than with laurel, crowned.
> The Nine themselves ofttimes have joined the song
> And revels of the Bacchanalian throng.[2]

For these lines, however, there is a classical tradition,[3] and hence a more decorous source of inspiration than the one they celebrate. But, to go no further back than Spenser, the lines recall the sophistry of Cuddie, the downcast poet in the *Shepheardes Calender.* Milton in his epistle is concerned with the powers that befriend 'light elegy,' while Spenser's swain shows the way to pour out 'thondring words of threate,' and to set the Muse 'aloft in buskin fine'; but the same ill-mated deities preside over both efforts. These are Spenser's lines:

> Who ever casts to compasse weightye prise,
> And thinks to throwe out thondring words of threate,
> Let powre in lavish cups and thriftie bitts of meate;
> For Bacchus fruite is frend to Phoebus wise,
> And when with wine the braine begins to sweate,
> The nombers flowe as fast as spring doth ryse.[4]

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[1] Cf. *Elegia* 5; *Epist. Fam.* 4, *Works* 7.373; *Education, Works* 4. 392.

[2] *Elegia* 6. 13–18; trans. by Cowper, pp. 593–594.

[3] Cf. E. K. Rand, *Milton in Rustication,* in *Studies in Philology* 19 (1922). 109–135.

[4] *Shepheardes Calender, October* 103–108.

We may add, however, that the conclusion of Milton's 'light elegy' belies its opening precepts; we find the young author in the very act of composing his ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity,* for which 'the first light of Christmas dawn' brought him inspiration.

Later, during the years of Milton's noblest poetical invention, he wrote most easily from the autumnal equinox to the vernal;[1] and, for the inspiration of his great epic, he no longer looked to 'the heat of youth,' 'the vapors of wine,' or the patronage of 'Dame Memory and her Siren daughters,' but to the power and wisdom of an Eternal Spirit.

The invocation by Christian poets of the pagan Muses, countenanced by Tasso in his *Discorsi del Poema Eroico,* Milton did not practise. Indeed, since Spenser's day those much revered

> nourses of nobility
> And registres of everlasting fame,[2]

the 'sweete Ladie Muses,' had so fallen in prestige that they were hailed by Ben Jonson as 'the mad Thespian girls,' and dismissed by Milton as 'an empty dream.' Tasso himself, though he symbolically identified the Muses with mind and intelligence, rejected them as sponsors for his masterpiece. Both he and Milton demanded, as it were, a Christian conversion of the Muse and, severing her from Olympus and 'the sacred springs of horse-foot Helicon,' sought to make her heaven-born. We may compare Stanza 2 of *Jerusalem Delivered*, with the opening of Book Seven in *Paradise Lost*. Tasso writes:

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[1] Phillips, *Life of Milton,* in *Of Education* [etc.], ed. by Lockwood, p. lxxvi. See Sir Joshua Reynold's comment, in his *Seventh Discourse* upon those who 'in plain prose...gravely talk...of attending to times and seasons when the imagination shoots with the greatest vigor, whether at the summer solstice or the vernal equinox.' And Samuel Johnson, in his life of Milton, deprecates the poet's 'fancies' regarding his mental sensitiveness to the seasons.

[2] Dedicatory Sonnet 4 to the *Faerie Queene,* 2–3.

> O heavenly Muse, that not with fading bays
> Deckest thy brow by the Heliconian spring,
> But sittest crowned with stars' immortal rays
> In Heaven, where legions of bright angels sing!
> Inspire life in my wit, my thought upraise,
> My verse ennoble, and forgive the thing,
> If fictions light I mix with truth divine,
> And fill these lines with other praise than thine.[1]

And Milton:

> Descend from Heaven, Urania, by that name
> If rightly thou art called, whose voice divine
> Following, above the Olympian hill I soar,
> Above the flight of Pegasean wing!
> The meaning, not the name, I call; for thou
> Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top
> Of old Olympus dwell'st; but, heavenly-born,
> Before the hills appeared, or fountain flowed,
> Thou with Eternal Wisdom didst converse,
> Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play
> In presence of the Almighty Father, pleased
> With thy celestial song.[2]

According to Tasso, the invocation should not be limited to the opening of a poem, but should be repeated at intervals throughout its course.[3] This idea found favor with Milton, who exemplified it in the address to light (at once

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[1] Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered* 1.2, trans. by Fairfax.

[2] *P. L.* 7.1–12.

[3] *Del Poema Eroico*, Bk. 4, pp. 116 ff. Cf. Vida, *De Arte Poetica* 2.26–29:

> Nec sat opem implorare semel, Musasque ciere,
> Sed quoties, veluti scopuli, durissima dictu

invocation and apotheosis) with which he asks renewed inspiration at the beginning of Book Three. Sometimes the aid Milton pauses to entreat is of a special nature.[1] When Raphael has recited the triumph of the Messiah over the rebellious angels, the poet turns from such matters as Spenser had simply called 'things doen in heaven' to an account of the creation, and thus addresses Urania:

> Up led by thee
> Into the Heaven of Heavens I have presumed,
> An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air,
> Thy tempering. With like safety guided down,
> Return me to my native element;
> Lest, from this flying steed unreined (as once
> Bellerophon, though from a lower clime)
> Dismounted, on the Aleian field I fall,
> Erroneous there to wander and forlorn.[2]

Again, in Book Nine, the transition from the familiar talk between Raphael and Adam to the story of Satan's villainy and Eve's downfall is marked by a change to tragic notes, and a supplication from the poet to his 'Celestial Patroness' for an 'answerable style.'

Such are the data whereby Milton's theory of poetic creation must be determined. For a summary, his own words may be taken, in his account of the cogitations, the

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> Objicient sese tibi, non superanda labore
> Mortali, Divos toties orare licebit.

Trans. by Pitt:

> 'Tis not enough to call for aid divine,
> And court but once the favor of the Nine;
> When objects rise that mock your toil and pain,
> Above the labor and the reach of man,
> Then you may supplicate the blest abodes,
> And ask the friendly succor of the gods.

[1] Cf. *Faerie Queene* 1. 11. 5-7; 7. 7.1–2.

[2] *P. L.* 7.12–20.

weighings and balancings, that preceded his choice of subject and of literary form, for the master-work of his life. Should this be epic or dramatic, he queried, should it be sacred or profane? And in its composition were 'the rules of Aristotle . . . strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed, which in them that know art and use judgment is no transgression, but an enriching of art'?[1] In this brief query, with its unmistakable bias, we find the clue to his attitude.

Regarding the function of poetry, in various ways it is evident that Milton deferred to the tradition of Horace:

> Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae,
> Aut simul et jucunda et idonea dicere vitae.[2]

The tractate *Of Education* implies Milton's belief in this twofold office of great poetry; and in *Paradise Regained* the strictures upon paganism (in which the sons of Zion are purposely arrayed against the sons of Greece) directly accuse classical poetry with being

> Thin-sown with aught of profit or delight.[3]

A full and positive indication of Milton's attitude on the function of his art is seen in *The Reason of Church-Government;* here, after avowing his high ambition as an English poet, and briefly enumerating various poetical types, he explains the end of poetry in terms of subject-matter and power:

> These abilities [of the poet], wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God, rarely bestowed, but yet to some (though most

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[1] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3. 145.

[2] *Ars Poetica* 333–334, trans. by Lonsdale and Lee: 'Poets aim either to benefit, or to delight, or to unite what will give pleasure with what is serviceable for life.'

[3] *P. R.* 4.345.

abuse) in every nation; and are of power beside the office of a pulpit, to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune,[1] to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what He works, and what He suffers to be wrought with high providence in His Church, to sing the victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ, to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. Lastly, whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and refluxes of man's thoughts from within, all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness to paint out and describe—teaching over the whole book of sanctity and virtue through all the instances of example, with such delight, to those especially of soft and delicious temper, who will not so much as look upon Truth herself, unless they see her elegantly dressed, that whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they would then appear to all men both easy and pleasant, though they were rugged and difficult indeed. And what a benefit this would be to our youth and gentry may be soon guessed by what we know of the corruption and bane which they suck in daily from the writings and interludes of libidinous and ignorant poetasters, who, having scarce ever heard of that which is the main consistence of a true poem, the choice of such persons as they ought to introduce, and what is moral and decent to each one, do for the most part lap up vicious principles in sweet pills to be swallowed down, and make the taste of virtuous documents harsh and sour.[2]

Note as of particular interest in this paragraph Milton's estimate of the regulative office of poetry. Aristotle tested tragedy by its *catharsis* of pity and fear; and many neo-classic Italian theorists (Tasso is an exception) assumed, without much reflection, the authority of their Greek master, and then, still without much reflection, applied the same test to the epic. In characterizing the function of poetry, Milton, in turn, possibly consulted his own convenience, and considered narrative and drama together, for the moment neglecting the lyric. If so, the phrases 'to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune,' suggest the concept of purgation, and extend their application from tragedy to the epic. But a simpler interpretation may be correct, and would involve no omission of a poetical type—for the function of lyrical poetry, whatever it may be, can hardly be defined as that of a purge. Let us interpret the passage so as to include the lyric. Milton taught the regulative power of great music. Does he not attribute the same function to all poetry that he desires to set 'beside the office of a pulpit'? And is not his reverence for his art inevitably founded upon that identification of the normal and the beautiful which colors his whole philosophy? Were the choice open, we may question whether, in formulating his poetical theory, there would be much more to gain from assembling definitions of the office of each special type, than from laying hold of fundamental propositions applicable to all. If the poet says that all true poetry helps to regulate human will and passion, and to quiet human perplexity and doubt, at least he equips us with a general truth.

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[1] Compare Milton on the influence of music, above, pp. 41 ff.

[2] Church-Gov. (Bk. 2), *Works* 3. 146–147. The passage has a general tendency, and might be supplemented by others more specific that are reserved for consideration in Chapters IV and V.

Besides the remarks on the nature and function of poetry in *The Reason of Church-Government*, there are allusions, mostly in the early writings, and on the whole conventional, that echo familiar traditions of the marvelous effects of 'poesie.'[1] But even these have a ring of freshness and sincerity. Milton never spoke without fervor of the potency of 'apt words.'

Plato's 'quarrel between poetry and philosophy,' which sprang from the ancient difference in estimating their functions, and produced many a 'defence' of poetry, left few traces in Milton. In ranking Spenser as a teacher above the great scholastic philosophers,[2] Milton assumes that poetry is better than philosophy as a means of *profit;* while in commending for its delight the poetical method of exposition by 'instances of example,' he assumes the greater excellence of poetry as a means of *pleasure.*[3]

In regard to history, the other rival of poetry, we have several comments. Milton ascribes to the good historian many qualities that belong also to the ideal poet. To Henry de Brass he writes:

> My opinion is that he who would describe actions and events in a way suited to their dignity and importance, ought to write with a mind endued with a spirit, and enlarged by an experience, as extensive as the actors in the scene, that he may have a capacity properly to comprehend and to estimate the most momentous affairs, and to relate them, when

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[1] See *Ad Patrem* 17-40.

[2] *Areopagitica, Works* 4.412. And see *Animadversions, Works* 3.237-238, where Milton refers to the didactic value of Spenser's 'lively' personations.

[3] Milton's thought might be expanded in the words of Sidney: 'Whatsoever the philosopher saith should be done, he ['the peerless poet'] giveth a perfect picture of it in some one by whom he presupposeth it was done, so as he coupleth the general notion with the particular example. A perfect picture, I say, for he yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description: which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul so much as that other doth.' *An Apology for Poetry,* in *Eliz. Crit. Essays* 1.164.

> comprehended, with energy and distinctness, with purity and perspicuity of diction. The decorations of style I do not greatly heed; for I require an historian and not a rhetorician.[1]

But if decorations of style are partly denied the historian, the selection and elimination associated with artistic technique are partly enjoined upon him. 'Ofttimes,' says Milton, '. . . wise men, and of best ability, have forborne to write the acts of their own days, while they beheld with a just loathing and disdain, not only how unworthy, how perverse, how corrupt, but often how ignoble, how petty, how below all history, the persons and their actions were.'[2] Though one is here reminded of 'the main consistence of a true poem,'[3] the vital distinction between poetry and history remains clear. Like Sidney, Milton ties the historians 'not to what should be, but to what is,' and, stigmatizing as a disease their indulgence in 'idle fancies,'[4] rebukes in them any effort toward freedom from the actual:

> But either the inbred vanity of some, in that respect unworthily called historians, or the fond zeal of praising their nations above truth, hath so transported them, that where they find nothing faithfully to relate, they fall confidently to invent what they think may either best set off their history or magnify their country.[5]

In history Milton sees the materials of poetry, but it is for the poets to deal with them imaginatively, for the historians to supply them accurately.[6] His inclusion of many reputed tales in *The History of Britain* he justifies upon the sole ground that they will be of use to 'our

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[1] *Epist. Fam.* 23, trans. by Fellowes, 1. xxxiv (*Works* 7.402). And see *Epist. Fam.* 26, *Works* 7.405.

[2] *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 1), *Works* 5. 1–2.

[3] See above, p. 70.

[4] *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 3), *Works* 5.123.

[5] *Ibid.*, *Works* 5.104.

[6] See below, p. 114.

English poets and rhetoricians, who by their art will know how to use them judiciously.'[1]

Of the form of his art, apart from its function, Milton says little. In the tractate *Of Education*,[2] however, he speaks of poetry as 'less subtle and fine, but more simple, sensuous, and passionate,' than logic, or the flower of logic which is rhetoric. Often only half this passage is quoted, and freed from restrictions, and, robbed of the comparison, is converted into flat affirmation—that poetry is simple, sensuous, and passionate. Coleridge,[3] among others, thus misread Milton, adding both extravagance and error in his commentary upon the three adjectives, which he regards as providing the final test of poetic quality.

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[1] *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 1), *Works* 5.3.

[2] *Works* 4.389.

[3] See his *Notes and Lectures on Shakespeare* (Definition of Poetry), *Works*, ed. by Shedd, 4.21: 'It is remarkable . . . that Milton in three incidental words has implied all which for the purposes of more distinct apprehension, which at first must be slow-paced in order to be distinct, I have endeavored to develop in a precise and strictly adequate definition. Speaking of poetry, he says, as in a parenthesis: "which is simple, sensuous, and passionate." How awful is the power of words!—fearful often in their consequences when merely felt, not understood; but most awful when both felt and understood!—Had these three words only been properly understood by, and present in the minds of, general readers, not only almost a library of false poetry would have been either precluded or still-born, but, what is of more consequence, works truly excellent and capable of enlarging the understanding, warming and purifying the heart, and placing in the centre of the whole being the germs of noble and manlike actions, would have been the common diet of the intellect instead. For the first condition—simplicity—while, on the one hand it distinguishes poetry from the arduous processes of science, laboring towards an end not yet arrived at, and supposes a smooth and finished road, on which the reader is to walk onward easily, with streams murmuring by his side, and trees and flowers and human dwellings to make his journey as delightful as the object of it desirable, instead of having to toil with the pioneers, and painfully make the road on which others are to travel—precludes, on the other hand, every affectation and morbid peculiarity; the second condition, sensuousness, insures that

Milton makes few other references to the characteristics of poetry. He contrasts poetry with 'the cool element of prose,'[1] and, in momentary impatience with the specious arguments of an enemy, he indicts, (as we have noted[2]) poetry and passion—a perplexing indictment which sends us back to the tractate for special consideration of the third adjective, 'passionate.' Salmasius, attempting to excuse the royal arrogance of King Charles, had quoted the fifty-first Psalm: 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned.' The comparison goads Milton to a retort; he suggests an explanation of David's protest, and adds: 'But whatever he means, the words of a Psalm are too full of poetry, and this Psalm too full of passion, to afford us any exact definitions of right and justice; nor is it proper to argue anything of that nature from them.'[3]

It is hard to reconcile this retort to Salmasius with Milton's faith in poetry as a revelation of universal truth, or with his particular reverence for the 'divine argument' and 'artful terms' of the Hebrew songs. That a Psalm might be surcharged with passion is conceivable;[4] that it should be

framework of objectivity, that definiteness and articulation of imagery, and that modification of the images themselves, without which poetry becomes flattened into mere didactics of practice, or evaporated into a hazy, unthoughtful day-dreaming; and the third condition, passion, provides that neither thought nor imagery shall be simply objective, but that the *passio vera* of humanity shall warm and animate both.'

[1] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.143.

[2] Above p. 63.

[3] *1 Defence* (chap. 2), *Works* 8.58.

[4] In *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (*Works* 4.461), Milton writes, concerning the same argument and the same Psalm: 'Whatever his [David's] meaning were, any wise man will see that the pathetical words of a Psalm can be no certain decision to a point that hath abundantly more certain rules to go by.' Here we have less difficulty in reconciling the passage with Milton's theory of poetry.

so full of poetry as to invalidate its teaching, is, from the nature of poetry, incredible. Probably Milton, without questioning its consecration to truth, here merely liberates his art from a bondage to fact and to literal definitions; indeed, shortly after in the same *Defence*, he supplements his own opinions, on the meaning of law and the institution of magistracy, from a host of poets, among them Orpheus, Pindar, Plato, and Hosea.

Milton's real fear regarding poetry concerned not literal accuracy, but propriety in its subject-matter. He condemns 'ignorant poetasters,' as Spenser condemned the bards of Ireland,[1] for a vicious choice of material; and, like Spenser, he will allow no technical skill to redeem the offence. Nor could it have been otherwise. To a poet who thinks of his art as 'teaching over the whole book of sancity,' the question of content is not primarily aesthetic; and it is plain that Milton tested every poetical expression, no matter what its apparent beauties of structure and style, for an underlying beauty of theme and motive.

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[1] For Milton's stricture on the bad poet, see above p. 70. Spenser's runs thus (*Ireland*, Globe ed., p. 641): 'It is most true that such poets as in their writings do labor to better the manners of men, and through the sweet bait of their numbers, to steal into young spirits a desire of honor and virtue, are worthy to be had in great respect. But these Irish bards are, for the most part of another mind, and so far from instructing young men in moral discipline that they themselves do more deserve to be sharply disciplined; for they seldom use to choose unto themselves the doings of good men for the ornaments of their poems, but whomsoever they find to be most licentious of life, most bold and lawless in his doings, most dangerous and desperate in all parts of disobedience and rebellious disposition, him they set up and glorify in their rimes, him they praise to the people, and to young men make an example to follow....

'But tell me, I pray you, have they any art in their compositions? Or be they anything witty or well-savored, as poems should be?

'Yea truly, . . . they savored of sweet wit and good invention, but skilled not of the goodly ornaments of poetry: yet were they sprinkled with some pretty flowers of their own natural device, which gave good grace and comliness unto them, the which it is a great pity to see so abused, to the gracing of wickedness and vice, which would with good usage serve to beautify and adorn virtue.' Spenser is in a sense unjust to the Irish bards. They sing of Celtic heroes who are ethically no worse than the heroes of Greece; but they sing without the genius of Homer.

Milton's notion of the proper materials for poetry is shown in a passage already quoted from *The Reason of Church-Government.*[1] The omnipotence of God as revealed in religious and profane history, and the spiritual and worldly experiences of humanity—these things poetry shall 'paint out and describe.' As it stands in the text, this programme of subject-matter is, in point of expression, unlike any other that comes to mind. Yet in its assumption of an immense poetical domain, it is equally in accord with the concise opinion of Wordsworth: 'It is the honorable characteristic of poetry that its materials are to be found in every subject which can interest the human mind';[2] and with the diffuse utterance of Tasso: 'No wood was ever so full of trees as is poetry of subjects. . . . It embraces things high and low, grave and gay, serious and comic, public and private, known and unknown, new and old, native and foreign, sacred and profane, natural and civil, human and divine. Its limits are neither the mountains nor the seas which bound Italy or Spain, neither the Taurus nor the Atlantic, . . . but heaven and earth.'[3]

Of such concrete topics for poetry as Milton approved, his poems, and his memorandum of literary projects (to be noticed later), give us our chief knowledge. One detail which has chanced to emerge is relevant to the present discussion. Milton agrees to a choice of subject-matter even more inclusive than that of the Italian commentators whose guidance he commends; he freely admits one kind of material that several of them had disfavored, and that Castelvetro had prohibited. The subject-matter of the arts and sciences, declares this critic, is not understood by the crowd, and cannot be the imaginative creation of the poet; it must therefore not only be avoided as the main topic of a poem, but excluded from all parts of the treatment; in his opinion this rule was infringed by Lucan and Dante. Unquestionably the dogmatic discourse in the Third Book of *Paradise Lost,* and 'the studious thoughts abstruse' of the Eighth would have put Milton into Castelvetro's list.

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[1] See above, pp. 69–70.

[2] Advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), *Prose Works*, ed. by Knight, 1.31.

[3] *Del Poema Eroico*, Bk. 2, pp. 25–26.

Milton believed in the permanent life of beautiful verse, but among the many poetical conventions he avoided was the conceit of immortality as affected by the sonneteers. Classical tradition, and the presence of the conceit in types as unlike as Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* his *Ruines of Time,* and his *Epithalamion,* show that the idea found expression outside the modern sonnet. One might expect it in Milton; yet, in spite of classical associations—in spite of Pindar, Horace, and Ovid, and of neo-classicists in the Italian, French, and English Renaissance,—in spite also of Milton's faith in the permanence of good verse, he used the conceit but a few times, and then hardly in the usual way. In three juvenile Latin poems, *Mansus, Ad Patrem,* and *Ad Joannem Rousium,* he did conventionally state his belief in the lasting value of his verse, but from stereotyped utterances like that in the sixth dedicatory sonnet to the *Faerie Queene,*

[1] Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele,* p. 29.

or that in *Amoretti* 69, he is free. The theme of his verses on Shakespeare is the immortality of that 'dear son of memory'; and the figure of the enduring 'monument' which the poet has erected for himself in his work, is indeed present. But no one would cite this tribute to the dramatist as a stale literary device. Rather does the idea, in Milton's rendering, closely approach the fine ardor of the familiar Horatian lines—to which the convention goes back:

> Exegi monumentum aere perennius
> Regalique situ pyramidium altius,
> Quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens
> Possit diruere aut innumerabilis
> Annorum series et fuga temporum,
> Non omnis moriar, multaque pars mei
> Vitabit Libitinam.[1]

In *Comus* 516, and in *L'Allegro* 137, Milton speaks of 'immortal verse'; in *Paradise Lost* (6.373), he implies that there is immortality in his own:

> I might relate of thousands, and their names
> Eternize here on earth.

And in the eighth sonnet, he seeks immunity from the violent foes of the Commonwealth by alleging that the poet can bestow wide-spread and lasting fame.[2]

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[1] *Carm.* 3.30. 1–7. Trans. by Conington:

> And now 'tis done: more durable than brass
> My monument shall be, and raise its head
> O'er royal pyramids: it shall not dread
> Corroding rain or angry Boreas,
> Nor the long lapse of immemorial time.
> I shall not wholly die: large residue
> Shall 'scape the queen of funerals.

[2] Cf. Horace, *Carm.* 4.8. 11–34.

The notion was real to him, and once more, by apt and sparing use, he gave freshness and originality to something that had become empty and outworn.

Finally, Milton's aesthetic theory brings all fine art to a supreme test. Not content with exacting from music and literature, and, we may assume, from painting, sculpture, and architecture, that they benefit the individual man, he judges the arts in relation to society and the State. In his view, civilization and the arts prosper together, and he seems to have made no attempt to distinquish the one as cause and the other as effect. A century and a half later Shelley, reviewing the history of European poetry, was to come to a similar conclusion. Grouping the same elements surveyed by Milton, in such a manner as to compare the condition of poetry with that of 'architecture, painting, music, the dance, sculpture, philosophy, and . . . the forms of civil life,' he wrote: 'We know no more of cause and effect than a constant conjunction of events; poetry is ever found to co-exist with whatever other arts contribute to the happiness and perfection of man.'[1] To Shelley so interwoven are the welfare of poetry and the welfare of the State that, at the conclusion of his *Defence*, he gives his art the triple rôle of 'herald, companion, and follower' of every beneficial change in opinion or institution. Likewise the youthful Milton eagerly asserts the interdependence in fruition of the active and the contemplative life: 'Where no arts flourish, where all learning is exterminated, there is no trace of a good man, but cruelty and horrid barbarism stalk abroad.'[2] As the title suggests, *Beatiores reddit Homines Ars*

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[1] *A Defence of Poetry*, in *Shelley's Prose in the Bodleian Manuscripts*, ed. by Koszul, pp. 79, 80.

[2] *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7. 460, trans. by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.299.

*quam Ignorantia,* the entire argument of this Miltonic exercise in rhetoric goes to prove that the fine arts grow and approach perfection simultaneously with those institutions that are essential to the conduct of a free and elevated social life. In the *History of Britain* this conjoint ebb and flow again is noticed: 'Therefore, when the esteem of science and liberal study waxes low in the Commonwealth, we may presume that also there all civil virtue and worthy action is grown as low to a decline.'[1] In referring to Italy,[2] Milton repeatedly links artistic and civil development together. To his Florentine friend, Buommattei, he writes: 'I have never heard of an empire or state that did not flourish, at least in some degree, so long as it maintained the care and culture of its own language.'[3] And in his *Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth,*[4] he proposes, among other ideal measures, that 'the natural heat of government and culture,' mutually arising from an upbreeding of citizens in 'learning and noble education, not in grammar only, but in all liberal arts and exercises,' be communicated to all extreme parts, so that the whole nation may soon be made 'more industrious, more ingenuous at home; more potent, more honorable abroad.'

In short, with Milton, to whom as to other great poets, his vision was a very practical thing, the belief that all that is best in civil life advances with all that is most pure and fine in the arts is a commonplace. As we shall see, whatever interest he took, or failed to take, in the graphic or the plastic arts, whatever he knew of music, or thought of poetry, he was convinced that in the right performance of their function these all serve to beautify and purify the social organism. Their evolution is bound up with the evolution of the State; upon its strength and order they rely for support; to its freedom and vitality they steadily contribute. Therefore to betray the arts by misuse, by a lowering of standards, a confusion of aims, an indifference to their higher propriety, or an ignorance of their far-reaching power, is simultaneously to betray mankind in a worse disaster than could arise from negligence in any other field of action.

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[1] *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 5.29.

[2] Cf. *2 Defence,* trans. by Fellowes; 6.399 (*Works* 6.285).

[3] *Epist. Fam.* 8, trans. by Hall, p. 37 (*Works* 7.379–380). Cf. Jonson, *Discoveries,* ed. by Castelain, p. 50 (74). A recent writer in *The Saturday Review* concludes an article on *The Present State of the English Language* with this ringing echo of Milton: 'When a language becomes corrupt and degenerate, be sure that it responds to callousness and sensuality in the character of the nation.'

[4] *Works* 5.450–451.

# CHAPTER IV

## MILTON AND THE DRAMA

At the close of the 'sunshine holiday' and rural merrymaking in *L'Allegro,* young Milton turns for more thoughtful diversion to the 'learned sock' of Jonson and the 'woodnotes wild' of Shakespeare. In *Il Penseroso,* he forsakes the 'deluding joys' of the comic stage for the melancholy delights of 'gorgeous Tragedy'; and in the first *Elegy,* he divides his attention between Roman comedy and Attic and English tragedy. Thus the dramatic allusions in his later works[1] were the reminiscences, and the dramatic preferences of his later life were the outgrowth, of an early catholic enjoyment of dramatic literature. On the whole, his interest in the drama seems always to have been more literary than histrionic, but *Arcades* and *Comus* were, of course, intended to be shown, and in his writings are what one of his biographers called 'a serious and just apology for frequenting playhouses,'[2] and a number of direct references to the theatre. A few lines in the first *Elegy*[3] seemingly refer to the playhouses on the Bankside in London; and certain remarks in the prose about mute persons on the stage,[1] creaking doors in the scenery,[2] and hissing in the audience,[3] reflect an acquaintance with the practices and conditions of contemporary theatrical representation. Moreover, Milton, while still a Cambridge undergraduate, upheld an exacting standard for actors, and sat among 'the judicious.' 'While they acted, and overacted,' he writes, 'among other young scholars I was a spectator; they thought themselves gallant men, and I thought them fools; they made sport, and I laughed; they mispronounced, and I misliked; and to make up the Atticism,[4] they were out, and I hissed.'[5] Also he betrays an interest in the still cruder exhibitions of mimetic art in popular shows, pantomimes, and May-Day revels—whether a puppet Adam hitched through the simple action of a motion,[6] an antic Hobnail capered in a morris,[7] or the 'hey pass' of some juggler[8] at a town fair attracted an astonished audience, the gaping crowd and gaudy costume, 'the inexplicable dumb-shows and noise,' alone imparting to the latter performance any kinship with the art of mimicry.

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[1] E.g., *Works* 3.261; 8.11.

[2] John Toland, *The Life of John Milton,* p. 32. For the 'apology' alluded to see *An Apology, Works* 3.266.

[3] Lines 27–28, 39–40:

> Excipit hinc fessum sinuosi pompa theatri
> Et vocat ad plausus garrula scena suos.
>
> . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
>
> Et dolet, specto, juvat et spectasse dolendo;
> Interdum lacrymis dulcis amaror inest.

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Trans. by Cowper:

Here too I visit, or to smile or weep,
The winding theatre's majestic sweep;
The grave or gay colloquial scene recruits
My spirits, spent in learning's long pursuits;
. . . . . . . . . . . .
I gaze, and grieve, still cherishing my grief.
At times, e'en bitter tears yield sweet relief.

[1] *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 4), *Works* 5.177.

[2] *1 Defence* (Preface), *Works* 8.6.

[3] *Eikonoclastes* (1), *Works* 3.339.

[4] See below, p. 142, n. 1

[5] *An Apology*, *Works* 3.268.

[6] *Areopagitica*, *Works* 4.418.

[7] *Colasterion*, *Works* 4.365.

[8] *Animadversions*, *Works* 3.210.

On the allusions to genuine drama in *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso,* and the first *Elegy,* we simply give the gist of various commentaries. The comic characters enumerated in the *Elegy*[1] are identified as largely Terentian. The *patronus* (line 31), translated by Cowper as,

> Some coifed brooder o'er a ten years' cause,

is referred to a Latin play by Ruggles, called *Ignoramus.*[2] The youth (line 45), dying 'hapless on his bridal day,' suggests both Sophocles' Haemon and Shakespeare's Romeo; the ghost in the next lines may call to mind the Senecan drama, or *Hamlet,* or *Macbeth,* or *Richard III*; and the Greek tragedies are the sources of the final references. The following passage from *Il Penseroso* limits tragedy to royal themes, and primarily refers to the Greek classics:

> Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
> In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
> Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
> Or the tale of Troy divine,
> Or what (though rare) of later age
> Ennobled hath the buskined stage.[3]

*L'Allegro,* we have seen, refers to the 'learned sock' of Jonson. The epithet needs no comment and has aroused no protest. But as people often take for precise verdicts the chance-allusions of one great man to another, the two lines devoted to Shakespeare have not been so quietly received. When Milton, in words suited to the capricious tone of his lyric, calls Shakespeare 'Fancy's child,' and

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[1] Cf. Cowper's translation, lines 31–38.

[2] The play probably was not produced in London, and the date of composition is unknown, but there was a translation by one R. C., printed at London in 1662.

[3] *Il Pens.* 97–102.

Shakespeare's romantic comedy 'wild' and native 'woodnotes,' not all readers are pleased. Many, their enthusiasm half-met, think the praise so faint as to be damning. Others understand the word 'fancy,'[1] and consider Shakespeare's display of that quality his greatest charm; these are satisfied by Milton's tribute, and find it wholly discriminating. Warton, in editing Milton's juvenile poems, finds a way, through the words of the poet's nephew, to amplify the two lines: 'There is good reason,' he writes, 'to suppose that Milton threw many additions and corrections into the *Theatrum Poetarum*, a book published by his nephew, Edward Phillips, in 1675. It contains criticisms far above the taste of that period. Among these is the following judgment of Shakespeare, which was not then, I believe, the general opinion, and which perfectly coincided both with the sentiments and with the words of the text [in *L'Allegro*].'[2] This 'judgment' Warton condenses; I give it in full:

> William Shakespeare, the glory of the English stage, whose nativity at Stratford upon Avon is the highest honor that town can boast of. From an actor of tragedies and comedies, he became a maker; and such a maker that, though some others may perhaps pretend to a more

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[1] In the notes to R. C. Brown's *English Poems by John Milton*, Archbishop Trench is quoted as follows: ' "Fancy's Child" may pass, seeing that "fancy" and imagination were not effectually desynonymized when Milton wrote; nay "fancy" was to him the greater name.' A discussion of the meaning of 'fancy' in the seventeenth century does not properly belong to the theme of this essay, but we may note that the word, besides its literary signification, had a technical value in the vocabulary of Elizabethan psychology. See *P. L.* 4.802–803; 5.113; 8.188, 460–461, etc.; and compare Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* 1.1.2.7. See also Dowden, *Elizabethan Psychology*, in *Essays Modern and Elizabethan*, pp. 320 ff.

[2] *Poems upon Several Occasions, English, Italian, and Latin*, ed. by Warton, p. 60.

> exact decorum and economy, especially in tragedy, never any expressed a more lofty and tragic height; never any represented nature more purely to the life, and, where the polishments of art are most wanting (as probably his learning was not extraordinary), he pleaseth with a certain wild and native elegance; and in all his writings hath an unvulgar style, as well in his *Venus and Adonis*, his *Rape of Lucrece*, and other various poems, as in his dramatic.[1]

The passage is somewhat illuminating, but it must be confessed that its light falls more brightly upon the wood-notes than upon the quality of 'fancy' by which Milton characterized the comedy of Shakespeare.

If we may thus supplement Milton from the *Theatrum Poetarum*, we may gain something by also adding at this point what Phillips says of Ben Jonson:

> The most learned, judicious, and correct—generally so accounted—of our English comedians, and the more to be admired for being so, for that neither the height of natural parts, for he was no Shakespeare, nor the cost of extraordinary education, for he is reported but a bricklayer's son, but his own proper industry and addiction to books advanced him to this perfection.[2]

Following Warton's lead, we may assume that in turning to Shakespeare for a stock example of the poet who is largely nature's child in contrast with the poet who is more obviously the product of his own effort, Phillips again reflects his uncle. To Milton, conscious perhaps of a balance of forces in his own nature, Shakespeare seemed principally upborne by an 'inward prompting,' Jonson by 'labor and intent study.' To compare them upon these grounds was scarcely to praise either; it was merely to illustrate a distinction. But at least it may be said that in the poem in honor of the great dramatist, with its ardent opening and solemn close, there is praise enough to convince his most jealous admirer that Shakespeare stood high in Milton's love.

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[1] Phillips, *Theatrum Poetarum*, p. 240.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 241-242.

We have paused over the traces of Milton's dramatic predilections and his fragmentary estimates of Jonson and Shakespeare, because such spontaneously revealed tastes and chance-criticisms correctly indicate the formal artistic principles of a mind so unified as his. Now we shall investigate more technical data; and henceforward also we can show the main theoretical influences upon Milton's thought and practice. These influences he acknowledges by implication in the tractate *Of Education*, where he speaks of 'that sublime art which in Aristotle's *Poetics*, in Horace, and the Italian commentaries of Castelvetro, Tasso, Mazzoni, and others, teaches what the laws are of a true epic poem; what of a dramatic; what of a lyric; what decorum is (which is the grand master-piece to observe).'[1] We shall try to follow him in his selection, assimilation, and recombination of material from these sources of classical and neo-classical theory.

To Milton, the function of the drama, broadly considered, was that of the fine arts in general. Within the limits of delightful teaching, however, right tragedy (we shall, for the moment, disregard comedy) attains a peculiar end, which Milton, a professed student of Aristotle, calls the purgation of pity and fear. But in saying thus much, the poet offers us a problem rather than an axiom; for, as Dr. Spingarn observes, 'No passage in Aristotle's *Poetics* has been subjected to more discussion, and certainly no passage has been more misunderstood, than that in which, at the close of his definition of tragedy, he states its peculiar function to be that of effecting through pity and fear the proper purgation (κάθαρσις) of these emotions.'[1] At the beginning, then, of our examination of Milton's concept of tragedy, we meet this problem. In the history of criticism there have been two main interpretations of *catharsis*; and each of these has proved very capable of modification, and of perversion. According to one, the term implies purgation; according to the other, purification.[2] With which do we find Milton in agreement? Had he in mind a metaphor from physiology, and consequently did he mean that tragedy 'cleared away' such emotions as pity and fear? Or did he think of the religious sense of *catharsis*, and relate the term to the ceremony of purification (*lustratio*)? The preface to *Samson Agonistes* seems to countenance both views; certain lines in the poem rather suggest purgation; while in the Latin definition on the title-page, Aristotle's κάθαρσις is rendered by *lustratio*[1] (rather than *purgatio*).

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[1] *Education, Works* 4.389.

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[1] *Lit Crit. in the Ren.*, pp. 74–75.

[2] For a critical and historical résumé of the interpretations of κάθαρσις, see Bywater's edition of the *Poetics*, pp. 152–161, 361–365. See also Gillet, *The Catharsis-Clause in German Criticism*, in the *Journal of Philology* 35. 95–112, and Bywater, *Milton and the Aristotelian Definition of Tragedy*, *ibid.* 27. 267–275.

[3] 'Tragoedia est imitatio actionis seriae, etc. Per misericordiam et metum perficiens talium affectuum lustrationem.' Bywater treats this rendering as Milton's own Latin version of the original. See Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. by Bywater, Appendix, p. 362. But in the article in the *Journal of Philology*, 27. 267–275, Bywater announces his belief that to Milton *catharsis* had the value of a medical rather than a religious term. His remarks may be summarized as follows: Early translators of and commentators on the *Poetics* took *catharsis* to mean purification in the ceremonial sense, regardless of whether they chose 'purgatio,' 'expiatio,' or 'lustratio' as its Latin equivalent. It was from commentators on the *Politics* that the word as it there appears (cf. 8.7. 1341$^{b}$38) received a medical signification,

Accordingly, since Milton wavers between the two notions, we cannot be certain which one he favored; yet it is worth while to examine whatever in his writings may refer to the end of tragedy.

In the preface to *Samson Agonistes,* a web of classical and neo-classical doctrine, Milton, under the heading, *Of that Sort of Dramatic Poem which is called Tragedy,* writes:

> Tragedy, as it was anciently composed, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems: therefore said by Aristotle to be of power by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such like passions; that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is Nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion: for so in physic things of melancholic hue and quality are used against melancholy, sour against sour, salt to remove salt humors.

In commenting on this passage, Butcher[1] and Spingarn[2] remark that it follows in the wake of Italian criticism; and no doubt it does. Yet the statement should be qualified, for Italian criticism, though guided by the classical lodestar, was not 'in one bottom trusted'; and Milton, in assembling the elements of his dramatic theory, must have

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and by one of them, Scaino, that the suggestion was made to interpret the tragic *catharsis* also as a medical figure. For some reason Scaino's suggestion was largely overlooked: Riccoboni, Beni, Heinsius, and Goulston all passed it by. But Galluzzi, who was living and teaching in Rome at the time of Milton's visit to Italy, took it up. Bywater concludes that, although the medical or physiological interpretation of the tragic *catharsis* was not found by Milton in any of the ordinary versions of the *Poetics,* and although it is impossible to say just where he came by it, it was not unknown in his day, and should be regarded as adopted and emphasized by him rather than as invented or freshly rediscovered The present writer is not fully convinced that the translators and commentators so prevailingly ignored the medical figure.

[1] Butcher, *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry,* p. 247.

[2] Spingarn, *Lit. Crit. in the Ren.,* p. 80.

followed in the wake of first one and then another critic. The neo-classicists, laboring at a trustworthy exegesis of Aristotle on the tragic purgation, rarely arrived at similar interpretations, and in the end befogged the issue. As a matter of fact, Spingarn himself, in speaking of the influence of the Italians, selects Minturno as the particular theorist with whose notion of the *catharsis* of pity and fear Milton agrees. He writes:

> This process of purgation is likened by Minturno to the method of a physician: 'As a physician eradicates, by means of poisonous medicine, the perfervid poison of disease which affects the body, so tragedy purges the mind of its impetuous perturbations by the force of these emotions beautifully expressed in verse.'[1]
>
> According to this interpretation of the *catharsis*, tragedy is a mode of homeopathic treatment, affecting the cure of one emotion by means of a similiar one;[2] and we find Milton, in the preface to *Samson Agonistes*, explaining the *catharsis* in much the same manner.[3]

But, as has been suggested, it is unsafe to argue from this harmony with Minturno that Milton had merely found in the commentaries of the Italians a consistent explanation of *catharsis* which he forthwith adopted. He must either have chosen for his own one of the various interpretations, or, from a selection of their elements, constructed what seemed to him a unified and proper concept. For Speroni and Minturno think one thing in regard to the Aristotelian definition of tragedy; Castelvetro, Vettori, and Robortelli, another; Maggi and Scaliger, a third. Compare, for example, with the passage just given from Minturno, the following approximate rendering of Robortelli's diffuse explanation of *catharsis;*

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[1] *Arte Poetica*, p. 77. (Spingarn's note.)

[2] But in his *De Poeta* (p. 63), Minturno's statement in regard to the function of tragedy reads: 'Tragica poesis id sibi potissimum proponit, ut misericordia captanda incutiendoque terrore animum a perturbationibus expiet'!

[3] *Lit. Crit. in the Ren.*, pp. 79–80.

> If any one should ask what was Aristotle's concept of tragedy, I should reply that Aristotle thought that the two emotions of pity and fear were purged by the tragic recitation and spectacle; for while men are present at recitations, they hear people speaking, and see them doing, those things that are very like truth itself. They then become accustomed to sorrow, pity, and fear; whence it is brought about, that, when in the course of human life anything befalls them, they sorrow and fear less; for it is necessarily true that he who never has sorrowed over calamity; sorrows the more vehemently if anything occurs that he does not wish· More than that, men always fear at the wrong provocation; whereas the poets, in their tragedies, present persons and occurences very deserving of commiseration. Even a really wise man may fear what is portrayed. Thus men are taught to know what those things are that justly call forth pity and grief, and rightly produce fear. And finally, those who witness tragedies receive this greatest benefit—they learn that the fortunes of all mortal men are common, and that there is no one who is not subject to disaster. In this way men more easily endure,[1] if anything adverse happens, and assuredly sustain themselves by a most powerful solace—the remembrance that the same thing has befallen others.[2]

With the modicum of truth in this exposition there is vastly more error, and Robertelli's notion of *catharsis* produced no clear echo in Milton. Certainly the view is not homoeopathic, like Minturno's, and, if it implies the pathological interpretation at all, perhaps describes a sort of prophylactic measure, more Stoical than Aristotelian, aiming at an emotional immunity rather than an emotional balance. But Minturno himself, as cited by Spingarn,

[1] 'Facilius ferunt homines, si quid adversi acciderit, eoque se solatio plane firmissimo sustentant, quod aliis etiam idem accidisse meminerent.'

[2] *In Librum Aristotelis de Arte Poetica Explicationes*, pp. 53 ff.

before formulating his definition, explains the effects of pity and fear on the spectator, and lays the stress, not on purgation through and of these emotions, but on the assistance they give toward avoiding personal suffering and disaster; and we find ourselves reckoning with another suggestion. Thus, whenever influenced by the Italian theorists, Milton, whether consciously or not, was forced to choose among their varied and often conflicting interpretations. In regard to this question of *catharsis*, the preface to *Samson Agonistes* recalls, it is true, some of the phrasing in Minturno.

Within *Samson Agonistes* certain utterances throw further light on Milton's idea of *catharsis*, and, as they are more spontaneous, they add suggestive evidence to that furnished by the deliberate explanation in the preface. Thus parts of the last speech of Manoa, and parts of the last chorus, express the effect of the tragic action upon those who witnessed and in some sense shared it. On the death of their kinsman, the men of Dan are exhorted by Manoa to an even greater calm and exaltation than already possess them:

> Come, come; no time for lamentation now,
> Nor much more cause, Samson hath quit himself
> Like Samson, and heroicly hath finished
> A life heroic.
>
> . . . . . . . . .
>
> Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
> Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
> Dispraise, or blame; nothing but well and fair,
> And what may quiet us in a death so noble.[1]

The Chorus, responsive to the refined emotion of the old man, are, by the greatness of the hour, divested of trivial perturbations; they continue with the strain:

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[1] *S. A.* 1708–1711, 1721–1724.

> All is best, though we oft doubt
> What the unsearchable dispose
> Of Highest Wisdom brings about,
> And ever best found in the close.[1]

And the play ends with a fine reminiscence of Aristotle:

> His servants he, with new acquist
> Of true experience from this great event,
> With peace and consolation hath dismissed,
> And calm of mind, all passion spent.[2]

One other passage in the poetry may be noted as connected with Milton's ideas on the function of the drama. Though it directly bears on 'the ideal spectator,' in regard to whose qualifications it raises interesting questions, it bears also upon our immediate topic. Aristotle's demand that the fable of the epic should be constructed, and its constituent parts supplied, on dramatic principles, left marked traces in *Paradise Lost*, among them the treatment of the fall of Adam and Eve. From his own words[3] we know that to Milton the 'doomful' events in the Garden constituted a tragic action. Accordingly, when these events are reported at Heaven Gate, the lines that follow may be taken to describe the effects of a tragic reversal upon an audience which seems, at first thought, 'ideally' composed. 'Dim sadness,' says the poet, did not spare 'celestial visages'—

> Yet, mixed
> With pity, violated not their bliss.[4]

But the spectators, alive to pity, remain untouched by fear. Their incomplete reaction makes us speculate. Is it fanciful to see in this episode a condition external to it (that is, a condition in the audience) operating in the manner of a familiar element within the dramatic economy (that is, an element in the leading character) to hamper tragedy in the full exercise of its power? A hero without a flaw, according to Aristotle, is incapable of arousing pity and fear, and hence is unsuited to tragedy. In the present case, do not the angelic spectators transform, and in a measure invalidate, the ends of tragedy? Lifted above human frailty, they are impervious to the more subjective and less lofty of the two tragic emotions. The story of Adam and Eve can produce in them no feeling of fear, because fear is aroused by the undeserved misfortune 'of one like ourselves,'[1] But fear is supplanted by sadness, and sadness in turn is mitigated by a pity which, though not purgative, keeps the angelic bliss inviolate. In order to accord with Aristotle's view in the *Rhetoric,* Milton should have excluded pity also, for pity and fear are correlated emotions: 'Plainly the man who is to pity must be such as to think himself or his friends liable to suffer some ill, and ill of such a sort as has been defined, or of a like, or comparable sort.'[2] And again: 'Men pity . . . those like them in age, in character, in moral state, in rank, in birth; for all these examples make it more probable that the case may become their own; since here, again, we must take it as a general maxim that all things which we fear for ourselves, we pity when they happen to others.'[3] Milton's thought is different. If the transgression in Eden, with its immediate foreshadowing of catastrophe, may be considered a tragic episode, we conclude that, in the course of spiritual evolution, the fittest, though still responsive through pity to the shock of tragic misfortune, will escape fear, and in a measure be superior to the influence of the drama. The ideal spectator, if his aesthetic and intellectual reactions are to be exemplary to his fellows, must be one whose emotional nature is responsive to all human experience; or, let us say, he must, like the ideal hero, be a man marked by some tendency to error, and predisposed in some degree to 'all our woe.'[1]

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[1] *S. A.* 1745–1748.
[2] *S. A.* 1755–1758.
[3] See above, p. 68, and *P. L.* 9.5–6.
[4] *P. L.* 10.24–25.

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[1] Aristotle, *Poetics* 13. 1453$^a$ 5–6 (ed. by Bywater, p. 35).
[2] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 2.8.1385$^b$ 16–19, trans by Jebb, p. 89.
[3] *Ibid.* 2.8.1386$^a$ 24–28, trans. by Jebb, p. 91.

Aristotle's doctrine on the end of tragedy has generally held its own in the face of all sorts of structural changes in the drama, and throughout all temporary misinterpretations of the *Poetics*. But, once we have considered function, the preface to *Samson Agonistes* becomes a difficult text. The better to realize its import, we must recall the state of the theatre in Milton's day. 'The poetic impulse of the Renaissance,' says John Richard Green, 'had been slowly dying away under the Stuarts. The stage was falling into mere coarseness and horror; Shakespeare had died quietly at Stratford in Milton's childhood; the last and worst play of Ben Jonson appeared in the year of his settlement at Horton; and though Ford and Massinger still lingered on, there were no successors for them but Shirley and Davenant.'[2] In 1642, we may add, the theatres were closed. Milton thus witnessed not the flowering, but the decadence, of the Elizabethan and Jacobean plays and playwrights; and he must have lamented what he saw. Nevertheless what we know of his extensive reading in the English drama, and the impressions of enjoyment we gain from his early verse, at first make it seem unlikely that in *Samson Agonistes* he sought to exemplify his actual dramatic ideals. Is this tragedy a protest against the prevailing English type, or is it simply a classical scholar's tribute to the Attic tradition? Does it indicate any specific attitude toward the drama in general? The answer appears to be that it does—that Milton, repelled by the inner spirit of the decadent drama, became suspicious of its outer structure as well, and rejected the current literary form; and that *Samson Agonistes* and its preface do indeed show what he offered as a substitute. He did not, it seems, merely announce or embody therein a personal preference for Greek tragedy, but recommended to contemporary playwrights in his own country a return to classical forms. A phrase in the preface may be thought to invalidate this conclusion—'The stage (to which this work was never intended).' If Milton wrote this drama with no notion that it could be acted, and if it thus has the value of an academic exercise, the underlying theory must be judged accordingly. But there is much to be said for another view. In the first place, throughout his writings the poet shows himself an unqualified advocate of classical drama, and makes no distinction between its substance and its arrangement. After the earliest poems, his references to tragedy are almost entirely restricted to the Greek masterpieces. In the tractate *Of Education*, it is these that he counsels the lads of his academy to study; in *The Reason of Church-Government*, he directs special attention to Sophocles and

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[1] Yet music, it should be remembered, (*P.L.* 6.59 ff.) breathed 'heroic ardor' into the angelic hosts 'that stood for Heaven,' and was not (1.556 ff.)

> wanting power to mitigate and suage
> With solemn touches troubled thoughts, and chase
> Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
> From mortal or immortal minds.

[2] Green, *A Short History of the English People* (chap. 8, sec. 5), p. 526.

Euripides; in *A Defence of the People of England*, he cites, on the attitude of a sovereign toward law, Aeschylus' *Suppliants*, Euripides' *Orestes*, *Suppliants*, and *Heraclidae*, and Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and *Antigone;* and in *Paradise Regained*, Satan, tempting Christ with wisdom, adduces the 'lofty grave tragedians' as 'teachers best of moral prudence.' Next, and most convincing, among the indications of Milton's feeling, are his outlines of dramatic plots,[1] jotted down for after-consideration; these uniformly show his intention to follow Greek models. On the other hand, beyond those already mentioned, he has no direct references to the Elizabethan playwrights, except in The Verse, where their rejection of rime is noted, and in the passage where he calls Shakespeare the 'closet-companion' of King Charles.[2] In addition, the heading of the preface to *Samson Agonistes* implies an expression of a general theory: '*Of that sort of dramatic poem which is called Tragedy*.' What follows is thought necessary as introducing a play 'much different from what among us passes for best.' The phrase 'passes for best,' with its warning note against popular standards, implies a comparison with the acted English drama of the day —with what passed for best, not in the study, but on the stage. And in this spirit of warning, Milton censures a distinctive feature of Renaissance drama, the 'error of intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity,' as a means of currying popular favor. Finally, Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are termed 'the three tragic poets unequaled yet by any, and the best rule to all who endeavor to write tragedy.' In the face of these things, Milton's remark that the work was not intended for the stage does not involve what one commentator has called the abandonment of the great regulating principle of Greek dramatic art. On the contrary, the statement amounts only to this, that Milton did not expect forcibly to produce *Samson Agonistes* under theatrical conditions in the time of the Restoration, and had therefore made no mechanical preparation against such an emergency. Perhaps he even was minded to invite a test of dramatic excellence suggested by Aristotle, and zealously proposed by sixteenth-century commentators, according to which the tragic effect should prove attainable without a public performance and actors.[1] But in any case, there is reason to think that he believed it both possible and expedient to revive the classical type of drama on the stage, and shaped his dramatic theory in that belief.

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[1] See below, pp. 116 ff.

[2] *Eikonoclastes* (1), *Works* 3.345.

Reverting to details in the preface to *Samson Agonistes*, we note first the author's distaste for any confusion of dramatic types. His remarks follow upon a list of men 'in highest dignity' who have striven to compose tragedies. He says:

> This is mentioned, to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day, with other common interludes; happening through the poet's error of intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity, or introducing trivial or vulgar persons: which by all judicious hath been counted absurd, and brought in without discretion corruptly to gratify the people.

His censure is thus aimed at the inclusion of humorous situations or sub-plots in a serious fable, and also at the introduction of the ludicrous or mirthful figures generically known as 'clowns,' or of any characters whose normal function would according to Aristotle be comic rather than tragic.[1] But Milton, in his strictures upon the intermingling of tragedy and comedy, was hardly under the immediate influence of Greek or Italian theory. The problem had indeed shown itself in antiquity, and the compromise with the popular love of farcical diversion is modern only as it is complete. Aristotle may have felt the menace of tragi-comedy when he attributed the esteem for plots with 'an opposite issue for the good and the bad personages' to the weakness of the audiences, and denied that the pleasure derived from such plays was that of tragedy.[2] And Horace had been vexed with a public that called for the bear and the boxers in the middle of the lyrics.[3] Yet the hybrid form deplored by Milton is to be reckoned, upon the whole, a late growth, and the hard-and-fast distinction between tragedy and comedy a fiat of the Renaissance rather than an inheritance from iniquity.[4] No more should be said than that deference to classical example opposed the tendency to conjoin different dramatic elements, as it opposed a confusion of the issue in any artistic type. Of critics who raised their protest in the name of tradition, Sir Philip Sidney comes first to mind:

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[1] Aristotle, *Poetics* 6.1450$^{b}$18–19; 14.1453$^{b}$1–8; 26.1462$^{a}$17–18 (ed. by Bywater, pp. 23, 39, 91).

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[1] Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 5.1449$^a$32–37 (ed. by Bywater, p. 15): 'As for comedy, it is . . . an imitation of men worse than the average; worse, however, not as regards any and every sort of fault, but only as regards one particular kind, the Ridiculous, which is a species of the Ugly.'

[2] *Ibid.* 13. 1453$^a$ 32 ff. (ed. by Bywater, p. 37).

[3] *Epistle* 2.1.185–186:

Media inter carmina poscunt
Aut ursum aut pugiles.

Trans. by Howes:

The stupid vulgar
In the mid-action claim with deaf'ning bawl,
The Boxers or the Bear, their all in all.

[4] Cf. Gregory Smith, *Eliz. Crit. Essays*, Introduction, p. xliii.

> But . . . . their plays be neither right tragedies, nor right comedies; mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in clowns by head and shoulders, to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion: so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragi-comedy obtained. I know Apuleius did somewhat so, but that is a thing recounted with space of time, not represented in one moment: and I know the Ancients have one or two examples of tragi-comedies, as Plautus hath Amphytrio. But, if we mark them well, we shall find, that they never, or very daintily, match horn-pipes and funerals.[1]

Sidney's complaint had been anticipated by Whetstone when in the Dedication to *Promos and Cassandra* he also disparaged the companionship of kings and clowns.[2] It was heard in Milton's own day from the mouth of Lisideius in Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy:*

> There is no theatre in the world has anything so absurd as the English tragi-comedy; 'tis a drama of our own invention, and the fashion of it is enough to proclaim it so—here a course of mirth, there another of sadness and passion, a third of honor, and fourth a duel. Thus, in two hours and a half, we run through all the fits of Bedlam.[3]

In the next generation, the matter distressed Phillips, who wrote in his Preface to *Theatrum Poetarum* of 'that linsey-woolsy intermixture of comic mirth with tragic seriousness, which being so frequently in use, no wonder if the name of the play be applied without distinction, as well to tragedy as comedy.'[4] In the early nineteenth century,

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[1] *An Apology for Poetry*, in *Eliz. Crit. Essays* 1.199.

[2] Cf. *ibid.*, p. 59.

[3] *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. by Ker, 1.57–58.

[4] In *Crit. Essays of the Seventeenth Century* 2.270.

Shelley counseled against 'the modern practice of blending comedy with tragedy,' yet saw in it the opportunity for 'an extension of the dramatic circle.'[1] And finally, in Professor Irving Babbitt's *New Laokoon* we have a contemporary opinion:

> A clear-cut type of person, a person who does not live in either an emotional or intellectual muddle, will normally prefer a clear-cut type of art or literature. . . . He will desire each art and every *genre* to be itself primarily, and to give, as Aristotle says of tragedy, its own special pleasure. This is the one serious argument against tragi-comedy, that in trying to give the special pleasure of both tragedy and comedy it may fail of the fullest unity of impression.[2]

The main arguments for tragi-comedy are obvious; we have merely indicated Milton's place in the succession of those who dispute them.

Milton's concern for pure tragedy implies no condemnation of pure comedy. Though his writings do not furnish material for a theory of comedy, he 'invited' the 'Comic Spirit' under one of its guises in *Comus* and *Arcades*, and he includes comedy in his scheme of education. The boys who were to frequent his 'house of scholarship' might, 'with wariness and good antidote,' find it wholesome enough to taste 'some choice comedies, Greek, Latin, or Italian.'[3] The poet himself had at the proper time found in them a highly agreeable flavor.[4]

After discussing the models for *Samson Agonistes*, and the metrical forms therein employed, Milton goes on to its structure. He explains that, although he has indicated no mechanical divisions in his text, he has in reality observed traditional usage. 'It suffices,' he writes, 'if the whole drama be found not produced beyond the fifth act.' Thus he accepts the structural convention which was, so far as is known, first imposed by Horace,[1] and, like the greater number of the commentators, accepts it without remark, enunciating it as a rule, not expounding it as a principle.[2] Perhaps the few efforts there had been at explanation disheartened him. Certainly it would have been no better to repeat Castelvetro's observation that, there being five fingers on the hand, the number five was of peculiar convenience for the memory,[3] than to let the matter pass as dogma.[4]

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[1] *Defence of Poetry*, in *Shelley's Prose in the Bodleian Manuscripts* ed. by Koszul, p. 81.

[2] *The New Laokoon, An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts*, pp. 247-248.

[3] *Education*, *Works* 4.388. With these 'choice comedies' Milton groups 'those tragedies also that treat of household matters, as *Trachiniae*, *Alcestis*, and the like.'

[4] See above, pp. 83 ff.

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[1] *Ars Poetica* 188–190:

> Neve minor neu sit quinto productior actu
> Fabula, quae posci volt et spectata reponi.

Trans. by Howes:

> To five acts lengthened be the piece, not more,
> That asks the long applause and loud encore.

The application of the Horatian rule is by some critics inexplicably narrowed to comedy. See 'the Cannons' from the *Ars Poetica*, summarized by Fabricius, translated and appended to the *Discourse of English Poetrie* by William Webb in *Eliz. Crit. Essays* 1.293; and see Dryden's *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, in *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. by Ker, 1.45.

[2] This structural division into five acts is, of course, quite different from Aristotle's division of tragedy into five quantitative parts. See Aristotle, *Poetics* 12. 1452$^b$ 14–27 (ed. by Bywater, pp. 33–34). In the Introduction to his edition of *Samson Agonistes*, Churton Collins has divided that drama into its quantitative parts, and has also furnished a concise discussion of the structural parallels between Milton's poem and the tragedies of Sophocles and Euripides.

[3] *Poetica d'Aristotele*, p. 88.

[4] See Philippe Legrand, *The New Greek Comedy*, trans. by James Loeb, pp. 289, 371 ff., and 383 ff. Legrand says, in substance, of the conventional division of dramas into five acts: In modern editions of Latin comedies the plays are uniformly divided into five acts. For the plays of Plautus, it is true, this division dates only from the sixteenth century, but for those of Terence it seems to be of much earlier date—as early, in

Next, Milton characterizes dramatic plots as 'intricate or explicit'; this item echoes the tenth chapter of the *Poetics*. The point, unlike the question of division into acts, was originally Aristotelian, and had given rise to page on page of disquisition and illustration in the Italian commentaries. Aristotle had said: 'Plots are either simple or complex, since the actions they represent are naturally of this twofold description. The action, proceeding . . . as one continuous whole, I call simple, when the change in the hero's fortunes takes place without peripety or discovery; and complex, when it involves one or the other or both.'[1] And later: 'We assume that, for the finest form of Tragedy the plot must be not simple but complex.'[2] The plot of *Samson*

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fact, as the time of Varro, who was in a position to know much about the New Greek Comedy that we do not know. He read Menander and Philemon, Diphilus and Apollodorus, in the original; and he had access to the treatises which formulated rules for dramatic composition. It may then be assumed, a priori, that when Varro applied the division into five acts to Latin imitations of the Greek, he intended to record their resemblance to their models, and to remain true to the original intention of the Greek poets. 'We have,' writes Legrand (p. 372), 'but meagre information about the origin of this law which was destined to survive so long. At the same time it is curious that the only drama of Hellenistic times of whose structure we now have reliable information—a play for marionettes, the *Nauplios*, which was performed during the lifetime of Philo of Byzantium—had exactly five μέρη. This fact gives some reason for assuming that the rule of five acts was already in effect at the time of Philo. Hence it would have become established between the time of Aristotle, who makes no mention of it whatsoever, and the second half of the third century. If it originated nearer the earlier date, it may very well have been observed during the time at which the νέα was at its height. Strictly speaking, the subject-matter of the *Nauplios* belongs to tragedy, and it is in a passage concerning tragedy that we find Horace's well-known lines. But we know that New Comedy copied the technique of tragedy in more than one respect, and probably the new parts of that technique were not the last to be adopted.'

Later (pp. 383–384), Legrand concludes that the rule of five acts was generally, though not always, observed by the writers of the new period.

[1] Aristotle, *Poetics* 10.$1452^a$14–18 (ed. by Bywater, p. 31).

[2] *Ibid.* 13. $1452^b$30–32 (ed. by Bywater, p. 35).

*Agonistes*, however, is 'explicit' (i.e. simple); there is no main discovery, and, for the hero, no 'reversal of situation,' although the relative position of Samson and his enemies is altered. Yet most of the Italians, upon whom (with the ancients) Milton says he modeled his tragedy, had accepted the Aristotelian view, and preferred the complex plot to the simple—in Milton's terms, the 'intricate' to the 'explicit.' Even so, if Milton sought theoretical precedent, he found it among his authorities; for Castelvetro, with characteristic independence, dissented from the majority. In his opinion, a 'simple' plot produced the tragic effect quite as well as a 'complex' one; it was not less capable of stirring the heart to pity and fear. *Samson Agonistes* thus exemplifies the tolerated but less generally esteemed *dénouement*—and does much to free Aristotle's statement from a too arbitrary interpretation.

When, continuing his remarks on dramatic structure, Milton speaks of 'such economy, or disposition of the fable, as may stand best with verisimilitude and decorum,' he is using in the last two terms two catchwords of neo-classic criticism, and briefly touching with a familiar hand upon the longest and most detailed discussions of the theorists. We shall merely indicate the meanings of 'decorum' and 'verisimilitude' in Renaissance theory, and their importance to Milton as qualities in dramatic writing.

Though it is reasonable to connect the sixteenth-century notions of 'decorum' and 'verisimilitude' with two different issues in Aristotle, it is not always possible to detect a sharp distinction in Renaissance usage. Had the critics used their terms precisely, 'decorum' might have been restricted to matters of characterization (with accessories like dress and the representation of customs), and 'verisimilitude' to matters of plot; for 'decorum,' except in the broad sense of artistic propriety or general fitness, had nothing to do with structure and incident, and, as we shall see, tended to associate itself with Aristotle's requisites for tragic character;[1] whereas 'verisimilitude,' when closely interpreted after Aristotle, obviously derived from his statements regarding probability and possibility in the dramatic story.[2] Thus, in the following quotation from the *Poetics*, the qualities later known as 'decorum' and 'verisimilitude' stand in proximity, yet need not be thought to overlap or merge:

> The right thing . . . is, in the characters, just as in the incidents of the play,[3] to endeavor always after the necessary or the probable; so that whenever such-and-such a personage says or does such-and-such a thing, it shall be the probable or necessary outcome of his character; and whenever this incident follows on that, it shall be either the necessary or the probable consequence of it.[4]

But it would seem to be in this very passage, where the opportunity to distinguish between the two qualities is best, that the opportunity to confuse them proved unavoidable. Perhaps any term denoting the probable in action and incident—in plot—would naturally by some be extended to the probable in character, the two being essentially interdependent; but it is strange that the keener students of Aristotle, remembering his distinction between action and character in the drama, did not avoid this extension, and the vagueness consequent upon it. Many Renaissance critics, however, did freely interchange the terms 'verisimilitude' and 'decorum.'[1] As for Milton's practice, had we only the preface to *Samson Agonistes* from which to judge, we might suspect that he also applied these words indiscriminately to the choice, sequence, and conduct of events in the dramatic fable. Other passages concerning 'decorum,' however, help to set us straight.

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[1] Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 15.1454$^a$16–36 (ed. by Bywater, p. 43).

[2] Cf. *ibid.* 9. 1451$^a$36 ff. (p. 27), 24. 1460$^a$26 ff. (p. 79), etc.

[3] Probability of incident Aristotle had already discussed, and this passage follows upon the statement of the four points to be aimed at in character.

[4] Aristotle, *Poetics* 15. 1454$^a$33–36 (ed. by Bywater, p. 43). Butcher (p. 55) translates: 'Just as this event should follow that by necessary or probable sequence.'

First, then, what did Milton mean by 'verisimilitude' in a tragic plot? His drama is proof that he did not mean an effect of perfect illusion, though some authorities, confusing probability with what we should call realism, connected 'verisimilitude' with a rigorous maintenance of the unity of time, and with even more forced measures for 'deception.' But *Samson Agonistes* provides no sign that to Milton the term involved an exact reproduction of action and circumstance. On the contrary, it indicates that 'verisimilitude' was, in his opinion, more nearly akin to the universal and the ideal than to the particular and the actual, and that he recognized the chance of collision quite as frequently between 'verisimilitude' and fact as between 'verisimilitude' and fancy. In short, the term, as applied by Milton to the economy of the dramatic fable, is a reminiscence of a statement in the *Poetics* that ramifies through almost every part of historical dramatic theory; I mean Aristotle's requirement that the poet should relate, not what has happened, but what may happen. In other words, Milton, when referring to 'verisimilitude,' practically declares that he has chosen his tragic plot in obedience to the well-known law that a credible impossibility is better than an unconvincing possibility.[1] The following passage, from Butcher's discussion of Aristotle, is an excellent commentary on 'verisimilitude' as Milton thought of it:

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[1] Though there is nothing wrong in speaking, as did Castelvestro, of 'verisimilitude in character,' it is unnecessary thus to extend the application in the term when a more precise expression is at hand in the critical vocabulary. In other instances the use of the one term for the other is more ambiguous.

> The rule of probability which Aristotle enjoins is not the narrow *vraisemblance* which it was understood to mean by many of the older French critics, which would shut the poet out from the higher regions of the imagination and confine him to the trivial round of immediate reality. The incidents of every tragedy worthy of the name are improbable if measured by the likelihood of their everyday occurrence—improbable in the same degree in which characters capable of great deeds and great passions are rare. The rule of 'probability,' as also that of 'necessity,' refers rather to the internal structure of a poem; it is the inner law which secures the cohesion of the parts.[2]

Much the same notion of 'verisimilitude' is found in Castelvetro, who writes substantially as follows: It is clear that the solution of the fable ought to come through the fable itself; that is, the issue from dangers and the cessation of difficulties ought logically to result from such incidents in the story, as, on account of necessity or 'verisimilitude,' were themselves the very outgrowth of the dangers and difficulties.[3] 'Verisimilitude,' then, was the technical name applied in the Renaissance both to elements of realism in epic and dramatic art and to the observance of probability in the incidents and logical sequence in the events of the epic or dramatic fable. It is in the latter sense alone that Milton feels it important in the 'economy[1] and disposition' of the plot of *Samson Agonistes.*

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[1] Cf. above, p. 106, n. 2.

[2] *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry*, p. 165.

[3] Castelvetro, *Poetica d'Aristotele*, p. 332. It must be acknowledged that Castelvetro is inconsistent in his theory of 'verisimilitude,' and, by now almost identifying it, and again plainly contrasting it, with historic fact and actuality, himself illustrates as well as any other Renaissance critic the prevailing confusion. Compare H. B. Charlton, *Castelvetro's Theory of Poetry*, pp. 41–49. Charlton thinks it more correct to associate verisimilitude with the Aristotelian doctrine of 'aesthetic semblance' than with that of inherent probability.

For 'decorum' it is still harder to arrive at an exact definition. The difficulty does not lie in choosing between two interpretations of the word, but in finding one clear and restricted meaning for it. Perhaps we shall gain by a glance at phases in its critical history. Aristotle, in the *Poetics,* had designated 'the appropriate' or 'proper' in dramatic construction, presentation, or style, by some form of the general term πρέπον.[2] In the twenty-first chapter of *The Orator* Cicero had employed 'decorum' as the Latin equivalent of τὸ πρέπον, and had glossed it as 'what is becoming.' But since his interest at the moment was particular, his emphasis was particular, and fell upon 'the becoming' as it affected manners and speech. 'For, as in life,' he wrote, 'so in a speech, nothing is more difficult than to see what is becoming. The Greeks call this πρέπον; we call it *decorum.*' In the next chapter he continues: 'To say a thing is becoming is to say that it is fit, as it were, and suitable to the time and person; which is often very important both in actions and words, and in a person's countenance and gestures and gait.'[1] In his *Arte of English Poesy* (1589) Puttenham couples the Greek term and the Latin as Cicero had done, and, his interest being rhetorical, offers colloquial English equivalents: 'The Greeks call this good grace of everything in his kind τὸ πρέπον, the Latins *decorum*: we in our vulgar call it by a scholastical term "decency"; our own Saxon English term is "seemeliness."'[2] Later Dryden, in the *Essay of Dramatic Poesy*, speaks of Ben Jonson as 'a painful observer of τὸ πρέπον, or the decorum of the stage,'[3] simply translating one term by the other. From the context it is evident that 'decorum' refers to place and time in the drama, that is, strictly speaking, to matters of 'verisimilitude' in structure. But when we come upon the Latin form adopted without its Greek parallel into the critical vocabulary of the Italian and English theorists, we usually find the meaning of the term restricted; 'decorum' now rarely stands for an inclusive fitness or propriety coextensive with good taste in composition, and rarely denotes a structural quality. As a rule it applies to diction and invention, particularly as they touch the characterization of individuals, localities, and periods of time. Its observance precludes inconsistencies and anachronisms of all sorts, and insures appropriateness of style, but has no bearing upon the organism of the plot. Thus, though still related to τὸ πρέπον, 'decorum' is more often associated with passages in the *Poetics* that do not contain the expression, yet deal with what Aristotle must have considered important specific aspects of propriety.

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[1] The exact significance Milton attaches to the word 'economy,' as applied to the fable of a drama, is shown by an item in his list of literary projects:

'*Abram from Morea, or Isaac Redeemed.* The economy may be thus: the fifth or sixth day after Abraham's departure, Eleazer, Abram's steward, first alone and then with the chorus, discourse of Abram's strange voyage.' There follows a brief outline of this proposed drama. Cf. Masson, *Life of Milton* 2.108.

[2] Aristotle, *Poetics* 17.1455$^{a}$25; 18.1456$^{a}$14; 22.1459$^{a}$4.

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[1] *The Orator* 21, 22, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, trans. by C. D. Yonge, 4. 401–403.

[2] Bk. 3, chap. 23, in *Eliz. Crit. Essays* 2.173–174. See *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.147, where Milton speaks of bad poets who have 'scarce ever heard of that which is the main consistence of a true poem, the choice of such persons as they ought to introduce, and what is moral and decent to each one.' And see also *Eikonoclastes* (2), *Works* 3.350, where he censures Charles I for comparing the Earl of Strafford, 'with scholastic flourishes beneath the decency of a king, . . . to the sun, which, in all figurative use and significance, bears allusion to a king, not to a subject.'

[3] In *Essays of John Dryden*, ed. by Ker, 1.75.

There continued, however, to be loose interchange between 'decorum' and 'verisimilitude,' and considerable freedom in the interpretation of 'decorum.' The theorists themselves were aware of this; and Minturno, feeling that there never had been a satisfactory discussion, undertook an exposition of the word. In his opinion, 'decorum' had its origin, not in a general term, but, as has been suggested, in the four Aristotelian requirements for tragic character—goodness, truth to type, truth to life, and consistency. Under this construction the rules of 'decorum,' in their development, provided that all sorts of men, as distinguished by age, profession, dignity, nationality, historic epoch, or whatsoever, should receive appropriate literary delineation, and appropriate speech and manners: 'For heroes speak differently from slaves, mothers of families from maid-servants.'[1] Though Minturno gives the fullest discussion of this matter,[2] Vida, Scaliger, Castelvetro, Mazzoni, and Tasso all touch directly or indirectly upon it; and if we turn from Italy to the English critics of the sixteenth century, we find the problem much on their minds also. We quote again from the Dedication to *Promos and Cassandra.* Whetstone condemns his fellow playwrights because 'they use one manner of speech for all persons, a gross *Indecorum*; for a crow will

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[1] Minturno, *L'Arte Poetica,* Bk. 2, p. 95.

[2] *Ibid.,* Bk. 1, pp. 48 ff., and Bk. 4, pp. 426 ff.

ill counterfeit the nightingale's sweet voice; even so, affected speech doth misbecome a clown.'[1] In the same way, Jonson, as reported by Drummond, censures both Sidney and Guarini for a lack of 'decorum'; Sidney because he made every one in his poetry speak as well as himself, Guarini because he committed the same fault in regard to the shepherds in his *Pastor Fido.* Edward Phillips praises the 'decorum, language, and well-humoring of the parts' in certain of Jonson's comedies,[2] and writes in the Preface to his *Theatrum Poetarum*: 'They likewise very much err from probability of circumstance, who go about to describe ancient things after a modern model, which is an untruth even in poetry itself, and so against all decorum that it shows no otherwise than as if a man should read the ancient history of the Persians or Egyptians to inform himself of the customs and manners of the modern Italians and Spaniards.'[3] These writers, then, restricted 'decorum' to typical fitness in imitation.

Although in the preface to *Samson Agonistes* Milton paired 'verisimilitude' and 'decorum' to the confusion of both, it undoubtedly was in the sense of typical fitness just discussed that he ordinarily interpreted 'decorum' and placed it among the 'master-pieces'—matters of high importance—to be observed in studying or writing poetry.[4]

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[1] In *Eliz. Crit. Essays* 1.59–60.

[2] *Theatrum Poetarum,* p. 242. As late as Gifford's edition of Jonson we find the dramatist commended for observing the decorum of place; that is, for creating the right geographical illusion in that version of *Every Man in his Humor* where the scene is laid in Italy.

[3] *In Crit. Essays of the Seventeenth Century* 2.269.

[4] Cf. *Education, Works* 4.389. The passage reads: 'I mean not here the prosody of a verse, which they could not but have hit on before among the rudiments of grammar; but that sublime art which . . . teaches what the laws are of a true epic poem, what of a dramatic, what of a lyric, what decorum is, (which is the grand master-piece to observe).

This conclusion is reached through an examination of other passages in which Milton names the quality or is obviously thinking of it. The following excerpt from *The First Defence of the People of England* has a twofold value—it touches upon dramatic characters considered as spokesmen of the author, and, more to the immediate point, it states generally the stricture Jonson made specific in regard to Sidney and Guarini:

> You must know, I say, that one is not to regard what the poet says, but what person in the play speaks, and what that person says. For different persons are introduced, sometimes good, sometimes bad; sometimes wise men, sometimes fools; and such words are put into their mouths as is most proper for them to speak; not such as the poet would speak if he were to speak in his own person.[1]

Beyond doubt, Milton here recalls the minute directions for decorous characterization set down in the Italian commentaries. More interesting yet is the passage from Milton's

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[1] *1 Defence* (chap. 5), *Works* 8.145–146. 'Decorum' of precisely the sort referred to in this passage is commended by Coleridge in Milton, in a footnote to the following lines from *The Nightingale, a Conversation Poem*:

> And hark! the nightingale begins its song,
> 'Most musical, most melancholy' bird!
> A melancholy bird? Oh! idle thought!
> In nature there is nothing melancholy.

With regard to the epithet he has quoted, Coleridge writes: 'This passage in Milton possesses an excellence far superior to that of mere description. It is spoken in the character of a melancholy man, and has therefore a dramatic propriety.' We are reminded of Coleridge's query in the *Biographia Literaria* regarding Wordsworth: 'Is there one word . . . attributed to the pedlar in the *Excursion* characteristic of a Pedlar?' In a recent article, entitled *Lord Jeffrey and Wordsworth* (*Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 38.2), Joseph M. Beatty, Jr., recalling the similar query made by Jeffrey, says: 'One of his most telling criticisms is that the characters [in Wordsworth's poems] are not true to real life. An earlier writer might have complained of the lack of *Decorum* in their portrayal.'

*History of Britain* in which he explains why he excludes set speeches from his chronicle:

> I affect not set speeches in a history, unless known for certain to have been so spoken in effect as they are written, nor then, unless worth rehearsal; and to invent such, though eloquently as some historians have done, is an abuse of posterity, raising in them that read other conceptions of those times and persons than were true. Much less therefore do I purpose here or elsewhere to copy out tedious orations without *decorum*, though in their authors composed ready to my hand.[1]

In other words, the right presentation of character and atmosphere, that is, 'decorum,' is endangered when historians ascribe to their personages speeches uncritically accepted as authentic or patently invented for the situation. But most interesting of all is the passage in *Eikonoclastes* which has often been mistakenly cited against Milton, not only as condemning King Charles, but as disparaging Shakespeare. With King Charles we have nothing to do. So far as Shakespeare is concerned, the reference commends his successful observance of 'decorum' in portraying the fraudulent piety of a tyrant. Milton writes:

> But he who from such a kind of psalmistry [as that professed by Charles in the *Eikon Basilikê*], or any other verbal devotion, without the pledge and earnest of suitable deeds, can be persuaded of a zeal and true righteousness in the person, hath much yet to learn; and knows not that the deepest policy of a tyrant hath been ever to counterfeit religious. And Aristotle in his *Politics* hath mentioned that special craft among twelve other tyrannical sophisms. Neither want we examples. Andronicus Comnenus, the Byzantine Emperor, though a most cruel tyrant, is reported by Nicetas to have been a constant reader of Saint Paul's Epistles; and by a continual study had so incorporated the phrase and style of that transcendent apostle into all his familiar letters, that the imitation seemed to vie with the original. Yet this availed not to deceive

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[1] *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 5.61–62.

> the people of that empire, who, notwithstanding his saint's vizard, tore him to pieces for his tyranny. From stories of this nature both ancient and modern which abound, the poets also, and some English, have been on this point so mindful of *decorum* as to put never more pious words in the mouth of any person than of a tyrant. I shall not instance an abstruse author, wherein the king might be less conversant, but one whom we well know was the closet-companion of these his solitudes, William Shakespeare; who introduces the person of Richard the Third, speaking in as high a strain of piety and mortification as is uttered in any passage of this book; and sometimes to the same sense and purpose with some words in this place: 'I intended,' saith he, 'not only to oblige my friends, but mine enemies.' The like saith Richard, Act 2, Scene 1:
>
> I do not know that Englishman alive,
> With whom my soul is any jot at odds,
> More than the infant that is born to-night;
> I thank my God for my humility.
>
> Other stuff of this sort may be read throughout the whole tragedy, wherein the poet used not much license in departing from the truth of history, which delivers him a deep dissembler, not of his affections only, but of religion.[1]

In Milton's Latin works the word *decorum* appears with some frequency, but seldom with technical force. The passages just given might be supplemented by others, but are evidence enough that the poet knowingly used the term with a full sense of its critical value.

The last sentence of the preface to *Samson Agonistes* alludes to the so-called unity of time; of this, as well as of the unities of action and place, Milton was mindful throughout the play. In Italian criticism the dramatic 'unities' had acquired an importance that should be carefully distinguished as neo-classic. Aristotle's remark[2] on the customary duration of the action represented in the tragedies of his own day was repeatedly misconstrued by the theorists, and transformed into a totally un-Aristotelian law. The unity of place, too, though never so much as mentioned in the *Poetics*, was enforced in Aristotle's name; whereas the unity of action, the only unity he did enjoin, was often overlooked.[1] Of the unity of place Milton said nothing, unless possibly he intended an allusion to it as well as to the unity of action, when, in the same preface, he mentions 'style and uniformity and that commonly called the plot.' As to the unity of time, he allied himself with those who allowed the dramatic action to cover a full day of twenty-four hours.[2] In so doing, he took a position maintained by many critics but midway between Minturno, who advocated the license of two days, and Castelvetro, who argued for a restriction to twelve hours.

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[1] *Eikonoclastes* (1), *Works* 3.344–345.

[2] *Poetics* 5.1499$^b$12–13 (ed. by Bywater, p. 15). Cf. *Aristotle On the Art of Poetry, an Amplified Version*, by Lane Cooper, p. 16.

The importance attached by Milton to the neo-classic convention of the 'unities' is better understood when we examine his tentative list of subjects for his great poem.[3] Most of his dramatic outlines indicate, by the presence of choruses, the employment of messengers, and the signs of arbitrary manipulation of characters, that he intended a rigorous observance of unity, not only in the action, but also in place and time. The mechanical effect of the chorus in localizing the action is particularly clear in the case of *Adam Unparadised*: 'The Angel Gabriel . . . passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of Man. . . . After this, Lucifer appears, after his overthrow, bemoans himself, seeks revenge on Man. The Chorus prepare resistance at his first approach.' Under the title *Sodom*, a play in which the chorus was to consist of the shepherds of Lot, the scene is laid 'before Lot's Gate,' and again it is evident that the place remains unchanged. Among the subjects from the New Testament is *Christus Patiens*; its outline reads: 'The scene in the garden, beginning from the coming thither till Judas betrays, and the officers lead Him away. The rest by message and chorus.' In the plan for a drama to be called *Abias Thersoeus*, Milton very simply solves the difficulty of presenting all the characters in one spot: 'The former part [of the epitasis] is spent in bringing the sick prince forth, as it were desirous to shift his chamber and couch, as dying men use. This play was to have a chorus of Elders of Israel. The familiar devices for preserving the lesser unities again shape Milton's procedure in the sketch for *Achaboei Cunoboromani* ('devoured by dogs'[1]): 'The scene, Jezreel. Beginning from the watchman's discovery of Jehu, till he go out. In the meanwhile, message of things passing brought to Jezebel, etc. Lastly, the 70 heads of Ahab's sons brought in, and message brought of Ahaziah's brethren slain on the way.' Under the heading *Macbeth*, a brief note indicates how much closer to the Greek than the Shakespearian fashion would have been Milton's treatment of the theme. He would have dispensed with something more than three of the acts in Shakespeare, and would have placed the murder of the king outside the dramatic action. The outline reads:

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[1] Castelvetro was the first of the Italians to formulate and impose the unities of time and place; unity of action he regarded as a frequently unavoidable consequence of the other two unities, but as being of no essential artistic value. See *Poetica d'Aristotele*, pp. 109, 163, 179, 504, etc.

[2] Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics*, ed. by Bywater, Commentary, p. 148.

[3] See Masson, *Life of Milton* 2.106–115.

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[1] Masson.

'*Macbeth.* Beginning at the arrival of Malcolm at Macduff. The matter of Duncan may be expressed by the appearing of his ghost.'

In the sixteenth jotting under the head of 'British Tragedies,' it seems likely that Milton did not plan for the observance of the unities of time and place: 'The slaughter of the monks of Bangor by Edelfrida, stirred up, as is said, by Ethelbert, and he by Austin the monk, because the Britons would not receive the rites of the Roman Church. See Beda, Geoffrey Monmouth, and Holinshed, p. 104. Which must begin with the convocation of British clergy by Austin, to determine superfluous points which by them were refused.' In regard to other jottings, such as the twenty-third in this same list of 'British Tragedies,' one cannot say what would have been the fate of the lesser 'unities.' But the difficulty is exceptional.

Our data indicate Milton's belief in the value of the neoclassic or 'Italian unities; yet one need not hastily infer that the poet ultimately misconstrued the Aristotelian view. About 1640, when he set down the list we have examined, there is little doubt that he was considerably influenced by the insistence of the Italian critics upon unity of time and place. But his own theory was not made explicit until years later, and on the whole it is reminiscent of Aristotle rather than the commentators. Milton seems to have understood that the unity of time was not prescribed in the *Poetics* as a fixed rule, but recorded as the ordinary and commendable practice of the Greek stage. His only words on the subject are not dogmatic: 'The circumscription of time, wherein the whole drama begins and ends, is, according to ancient rule and best example, within the space of twenty-four hours.' In taking this ground, Milton, if he is more exacting than Aristotle, speaks much in his tone, and quite escapes the absurdity of the Italian position.

So much we learn of our poet's dramatic theory from his preface to *Samson Agonistes*, and his list of literary projects. A few more particulars may be gathered elsewhere. On the kind of subjects he thought appropriate to the serious drama, we must consult not only the jottings, but his words in *The Reason of Church-Government*, where he speaks of poetry as describing 'whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily subtleties and refluxes of man's thoughts from within.'[1] As we have observed, the words apply as much to one form of poetical composition as to another. We gather therefore that Milton perceives the dramatic quality in an inner or mental action, such as is exemplified in *Prometheus Bound* or in much of *Hamlet*, no less than in physical action, such as is seen in *Ajax* or *Macbeth*.[2] When he characterizes the Apocalypse as 'the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy,' he reveals a conception not to be identified with either of the tragic types just mentioned.

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[1] *Works* 3.147.

[2] Cf. the outline, among the Scriptural subjects (Masson, *Life of Milton* 2.109–110), under *Moabitides or Phineas*: 'The epitasis whereof may lie in the contention first between the father of Zimri and Eleazer whether he [ought] to have slain his son without law—next, the ambassadors of the Moabites expostulating about Cosbi, a stranger and a noblewoman, slain by Phineas. It may be argued about reformation and punishment illegal, and, as it were, by tumult. After all arguments driven home, then the word of the Lord may be bought, acquitting and approving Phineas.' The dramatic action suggested seems almost entirely reduced to 'forensic debate.'

When we turn from the themes of serious drama to the character of the agent, we find that Aristotle's requirement of a lofty position for the hero of tragedy vexed his commentators quite as much as the meaning of purgation or the alleged laws of unity. Some critics, fancying themselves in accord with the philosopher, believed that the hero must be royally born, and that the tragic poet was bound 'to tell sad stories of the death of kings.' Others, nearer to what seems right, connected the rank of the hero with the dramatic necessity of a great and serious action, such as ordinarily would not occur in the life of a mean or lowly man. The worldly position of the hero, and his character as well, the commentators tried to analyze until they could find a standard tragic type. Aristotle's ideal is a man who, though not 'pre-eminently virtuous and just,' nevertheless is brought low, 'not by vice and depravity, but by some error of judgment.'[1] This notion was much altered in the strain and stress of Italian criticism. From his reading Milton could hardly fail to catch the importance of the problem; but where opinion was so fitful, and discussion so vexed, he may have derived little more. He evidently was convinced that tragedy requires grave and lofty personages;[2] so much may be argued from his choice of Samson for the hero of his own dramatic poem, and from the types considered in his list of dramatic subjects. We learn something more from two passages in *Samson Agonistes* that describe the ideal tragic hero, and the nature of the tragic catastrophe. The first is spoken by the chorus as they draw near to the blind captive:

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[1] Aristotle, *Poetics* 13.1453$^a$ 8–10 (ed. by Bywater, p. 35).

[2] Among his literary projects, however, we find the suggestion for a drama on the subject of Hay the Ploughman, who distinguished himself in a battle between the Scots and the Danes. Cf. Masson, *Life of Milton* 2.115.

O mirror of our fickle state,
Since man on earth, unparalleled,
The rarer thy example stands,
By how much from the top of wondrous glory,
Strongest of mortal men,
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fallen!
For him I reckon not in high estate
Whom long descent of birth,
Or the sphere of fortune raises;
But thee, whose strength, while virtue was her mate,
Might have subdued the earth,
Universally crowned with highest praises.[1]

The second passage, also choral, further explains the nobility of the hero as arising, not from inheritance or rank, but from his fitness for some pre-eminent service:

God of our fathers! what is Man,
That Thou towards him with hand so various,
Or might I say contrarious,
Temper'st Thy providence through his short course:
Not evenly, as Thou rul'st
The angelic orders, and inferior creatures mute,
Irrational and brute?
Nor do I name of men the common rout,
That, wandering loose about,
Grow up and perish, as the summer fly,
Heads without name, no more remembered;
But such as Thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorned,
To some great work, Thy glory,
And people's safety, which in part they effect.
Yet toward these, thus dignified, Thou oft,
Amidst their height of noon,
Changest Thy countenance and Thy hand, with no regard
Of highest favors past
From Thee on them, or them to Thee of service.[2]

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[1] *S. A.* 164–175.
[2] *S. A.* 667–686.

The passage continues to comment on the fall of the great man, which often seems disproportionate to his error. The sense of disproportion is aroused by *Samson Agonistes*, but less than by tragedies representing a lofty character at odds with petty and insidious or dire and ruthless forces that are beyond his power to control.

The nature of the tragic flaw which fits Samson for a tragic catastrophe, though not explained in these choral reflections, is elsewhere indicated. In his opening speech Samson condemns himself:

> Yet stay; let me not rashly call in doubt
> Divine prediction. What if all foretold
> Had been fulfilled but through mine own default?
> Whom have I to complain of but myself,
> Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
> In what part lodged, how easily bereft me,
> Under the seal of silence could not keep,
> But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
> O'ercome with importunity and tears?
> O impotence of mind, in body strong!
> But what is strength without a double share
> Of wisdom? Vast, unwieldy, burdensome,
> Proudly secure, yet liable to fall
> By weakest subtleties; not made to rule,
> But to subserve where wisdom bears command.[1]

Later the hero again confesses his weakness, and admits that his shortcoming was conscious:

> Nothing of all these evils hath befallen me
> But justly; I myself have brought them on;
> Sole author I, sole cause. If aught seem vile,
> As vile hath been my folly, who have profaned
> The mystery of God, given me under pledge
> Of vow, and have betrayed it to a woman,

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[1] *S. A.* 43–57.

> A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.
> This well I knew, nor was at all surprised,
> But warned by oft experience. Did not she
> Of Timna first betray me, and reveal
> The secret wrested from me in her height
> Of nuptial love professed, carrying it straight
> To them who had corrupted her, my spies
> And rivals?[1]

Finally, in two words, Samson characterizes his 'crime' as 'shameful garrulity.'[2] Taken together with the choral passages, the allusions to his disastrous shortcoming show that Samson fulfills the theoretical requisites of the tragic hero.[3] As we add his weakness to the list of notable tragic flaws—to the impetuosity of Oedipus, the jealousy of Othello, and the ambition of Macbeth—we establish another bond between Milton and the *Poetics* of Aristotle.

Milton's dramatic theory cannot be wholly recovered from his writings, but we may now summarize it so far as it has emerged. To begin with, he is strongly attached to the drama as a literary type. Next, we see that he believes in its humanizing efficacy in the State. Lastly, we observe his final preference of the classical form, and his assimilation of Aristotelian and Horatian principles. But we cannot understand his theory unless we reflect that, while ultimately classical, it received a bias from the Italians. And this bias we must be prepared to find also in his theory of the epic.

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[1] *S. A.* 374–387.

[2] *S. A.* 491. And see 193 ff., 233 ff., 426 ff.

[3] The tragic flaw upon which the catastrophe in Milton's drama depends is not so much an instance of the Aristotelian ἀμαρτία ('a mistake or error in judgment'—see Bywater's edition of the *Poetics*, p. 215) as of an inherent frailty or tendency toward error. Butcher believes that that usage wherein ἀμαρτία denotes a defect of character, though rare, is still Aristotelian. See his *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art*, p. 319.

# CHAPTER V

## MILTON AND EPIC POETRY

No one utterance of Milton on epic poetry is comparable in value to his remarks on tragedy in the preface to *Samson Agonistes*. And, strangely enough, his scattered references to narrative poetry are fewer and less direct than his scattered references to the drama. The difference may be traced to the fact that for the epic there was no complete and generally recognized theory with which Milton could ally himself. Such theories as were current in the seventeenth century had largely been expanded from Aristotle's brief section on the epic; and prolonged discussions had indeed arisen on the organic structure, and the poetical diction, requisite in narrative writing of the romantic and heroic types. But, although there are useful generalizations in this body of criticism, there is no adequate guidance for the 'literary' epic; and Milton's system, while it shows traces of Aristotle, crossed by neo-classical influence, could not reproduce any one distinct prototype. Yet, as we have seen, he was willing enough to be judged by rules of epic poetry, and by standards from which the best epic conventions had sprung. We may therefore seek out, and to some extent develop, the eclectic principles that shaped his theory of the epic.

As with the drama, we may first consider Milton's early reading, for his youthful predilections in narrative poetry led up to his later theory of the epic. From boyhood on, he was determined to write a masterpiece in accordance with a true humanism. Dedicated to the service of his fellow-

Englishmen and posterity, he was constrained to read widely in all national literatures, and to study, in particular, the great national epics. At first his mind was diverted and charmed by romantic poetry, especially by the Breton cycle, and his 'younger feet wandered . . . among those lofty fables and romances which recount in solemn cantos the deeds of knighthood founded by our victorious kings, and from hence had in renown over all Christendom.'[1] In *Il Penseroso* the young poet, high in his 'lonely tower,' beguiles the night with the 'sage and solemn tunes' that tell

> Of tourneys, and of trophies hung,
> Of forests and enchantments drear,
> Where more is meant than meets the ear.[2]

And long afterwards, as amid more serious themes he seeks a comparison for surpassing loveliness, the memory comes to him

> Of faëry damsels met in forest wide
> By knights of Logres, or of Lyonesse,
> Lancelot, or Pelleas, or Pellenore.[3]

His mind thus richly furnished with the lore of romance, the young Milton first alludes to his own project, in the poem to Manso:

> Oh might so true a friend[4] to me belong,
> So skilled to grace the votaries of song,
> Should I recall hereafter into rime
> The kings and heroes of my native clime;
> Arthur the chief, who even now prepares,
> In subterraneous being, future wars,
> With all his martial knights, to be restored
> Each to his seat, around the federal board,
> And oh! if spirit fail me not, disperse
> Our Saxon plunderers, in triumphant verse![5]

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[1] *An Apology, Works* 3.271.

[2] *Il Pens.* 118–120.

[3] *P. R.* 2.359–361.

[4] So true a friend as Manso had been to Tasso and Marino.

[5] *Mansus* 86–95, trans. by Cowper, p. 611.

And near the end of the *Epitaphium Damonis*, with more confidence and in more detail, he announces his plan to write an epic poem in his mother tongue on British legendary history:

> Go, go, my lambs, untended homeward fare;
> My thoughts are all now due to other care.
> Of Brutus, Dardan chief, my song shall be,
> How with his barks he ploughed the British sea,
> First from Rutupia's towering headland seen,
> And of his consort's reign, fair Imogen;
> Of Brennus and Belinus, brothers bold,
> And of Arviragus, and how of old
> Our hardy sires the Armorican controlled;
> And of the wife of Gorlois, who, surprised
> By Uther, in her husband's form disguised
> (Such was the force of Merlin's art), became
> Pregnant with Arthur of heroic fame.
> These themes I now revolve.[1]

Milton's early leaning toward romance may have been increased by the enthusiasm of Tasso, who, while discrediting the style, warmly advocated the subject-matter, of the French and Breton cycles. Beginning his *Discorsi dell' Arte Poetica* with an emphasis upon the importance of a right choice of epic material, Tasso, after some discussion of verisimilitude and wonder, decides against pagan themes, and proposes to substitute the deeds of Arthur and of Charlemagne. He says in effect:[2] History is the proper source of epic material. The chronicles of a nation unite religious and secular history; but only in the annals of Christianity does the modern poet find marvels that are true ready to hand for his imitation. The acts of the angels and demons are both marvelous and credible to men of the sixteenth century, as in ancient times pagan mythology was both marvelous and credible. Moreover, Christian and Hebrew religion have produced examples of perfect knighthood, which enable the poet to present an ideal to his State. The fable of the epic, then, should be taken from the true religion; but the poet should choose such matters as, without irreverence, he may alter and subject to his 'feigning.' Of this kind are themes from centuries long past, but with them it is difficult to observe 'decorum,' since they involve customs that are strange to modern men. Later history, on the other hand, while it has a great advantage in respect to 'decorum,' does not allow the poet to give free rein to his invention.[1] In this dilemna the critic suggests as a period neither too remote nor too near, the days of Arthur or Charlemagne. The argument might seem to Milton an echo of his own desire; and the following passage in *The Reason of Church-Government* suggests that in deciding upon the nature of his great poem he had in mind not only Tasso's practice but his theory:

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[1] *Damon* 161–168; trans. by Cowper, p. 617.

[2] Cf. Tasso, *Dell' Arte Poetica*, Discorso 1, pp. 200 ff.

> Time serves not now, and perhaps I might seem too profuse to give any certain account of what the mind at home in the spacious circuits of her musing hath liberty to propose to herself, though of highest hope and hardest attempting, whether that epic form whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso, are a diffuse, and the Book of Job a brief model; or whether the rules of Aristotle herein are strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed, which, in them that know art and use judgment, is no transgression, but an enriching of art. And lastly, what K[ing] or knight before the Conquest might be chosen in

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[1] 'Portano l'istorie moderne gran comodità in questa parte, che ai costumi ed all' usanze s'appartiene, ma tolgono quasi in tutto la licenza di fingere, la quale è necessarissima ai poeti, e particolarmente agli epici.'

> whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero. And as Tasso gave to a prince of Italy his choice whether he would command him to write of Godfrey's expedition against the infidels, or Belisarius against the Goths, or Charlemagne against the Lombards; if to the instinct of nature and the emboldening of art aught may be trusted, and that there be nothing adverse in our climate, or the fate of this age, it haply would be no rashness from an equal diligence and inclination to present the like offer in our own ancient stories.[1]

Milton, illustrating the familiar precept of Horace,[2] never more earnestly restated than by Tasso,[3] was 'long-choosing'[4] in the matter of his subject. His should be no 'presumptuous undertaking with weak and unexamined shoulders,'[5] as he once labeled the charlatanism of an enemy, but a task approached with deliberation. One recalls the lines of Vida:

> Nor, at its birth, indulge your warm desire,
> On the first glimmering of the sacred fire;
> Defer the mighty task, and weigh your power,
> And every part in every view explore;
> And let the theme in different prospects roll
> Deep in your thoughts, and grow into the soul.[6]

At last, in harmony with Tasso's suggestions, but, as it were, outreaching Tasso's grasp, Milton exchanged his first purpose for a higher: his half-formulated design in the Celtic material he abandoned indeed, but only to turn to an immeasurably greater Christian theme. According to

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[1] *Church-Gov.*, *Works* 3.145–146.

[2] Cf. *Ars Poetica* 38–40.

[3] Cf. *Dell'Arte Poetica*, Discorso 1, pp. 197 ff.

[4] *P. L.* 9.26.

[5] *An Apology*, *Works* 3.293. Cf., for the figure, Horace, *Ars Poetica* 40, and Vida, *De Arte Poetica* 1.39.

[6] Vida, *De Arte Poetica* 1.57–61, trans. by Pitt.

Coleridge, Milton saw that an epic must appeal either to a nation or to the world, and that the story of Arthur could not make a poem national to an Englishman; 'with a judgment at least equal to his genius, [he] took a mundane theme—one common to all mankind.'[1] His altered purpose has caused both regret and satisfaction. Jacob, for example, the author of *The Lives and Characters of the English Poets* (London, 1724), anticipated Coleridge as spokesman for those who find the gain far greater than the loss; Milton, he says, 'designed . . . [his poem] for the warlike actions of the old British heroes, and particularly of King Arthur, but his excellent pen was reserved for a more noble subject.'[2] Sir Walter Scott, on the other hand, represents the disappointed readers; he cannot become resigned to Milton's desertion of subjects so dear to both their hearts:

> Fired by the splendid fictions which romancers had raised on the basis of Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Welsh traditions, Milton had designed the exploits of King Arthur for the subject of his lofty epic strain. What we have lost in his abandoning the theme can only be estimated by the enthusiastic tone into which he always swells when he touches upon the 'shores of old romance.' The sublime glow of his imagination, which delighted in painting what was beyond the reach of human experience; the dignity of his language, formed to express the sentiments of heroes and of immortals; his powers of describing alike the beautiful and terrible; above all, the justice with which he conceived and assigned to each supernatural agent a character as decidedly peculiar as lesser poets have given to their human actors, would have sent him forth to encounter such a subject with gigantic might. Whoever has ventured, undeterred by their magnitude, upon the old romances of *Lancelot du Lac, Sir Tristrem,* and others, founded on the achievements of the Knights of the Round Table, cannot but remember a thousand striking Gothic incidents, worthy subjects of the pen of Milton. What

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[1] *Table Talk,* Sept. 4, 1833; *Works,* ed. by Shedd, 6.490.

[2] P. 102.

> would he not have made of the adventure of the Ruinous Chapel, the Perilous Manor, the Forbidden Seat, the Dolorous Wound, and many others susceptible of being described in the most sublime poetry![1]

As Milton hesitated over his theme, he may have had some of these reasons and regrets in mind.

Milton was irresolute regarding the outer form of his poem as well as the subject. His choice of a literary type was undetermined when he went to Italy, and on his return he still showed his indecision. Thus in *The Reason of Church-Government*,[2] published in 1642, he in turn proposes the epic, the drama, and various forms of the lyric for his masterpiece, without evincing a clear preference for any one of them. But to the same year is assigned the Cambridge Manuscript, with its notes and outlines of literary projects, and here the drama evidently holds first place in his interest. The list is, in fact, accepted by many as good evidence that he temporarily resolved to cast his major composition in a dramatic mold.[3] He made four short drafts for a tragedy on the theme of *Paradise Lost*, and according to Phillips he had written, as its opening lines, part of Satan's speech in defiance of light,[1] when some influence, at the nature of which we can only guess, changed his purpose.

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[1] Introduction to *King Arthur*, Dryden's *Works*, ed. by Scott and Saintsbury, 8.125.

[2] *Works* 3.145–146.

[3] In an article entitled *The Cambridge Manuscript and Milton's Plans for an Epic*, in *Studies in Philology*, April, 1919, Allan H. Gilbert proposes a simplification of the problem raised by Milton's list of literary projects. Professor Gilbert argues from its irregular and fragmentary aspect that 'the Cambridge Manuscript is nothing more than a fortunate survival of a part of Milton's papers.' 'It is altogether likely' he says, 'that such a man as Milton would have a considerable accumlation of more or less valuable manuscripts, and among the papers which have not been preserved to us there may have been a list of subjects and plans for heroic poems similar to the plans for tragedies in the Cambridge Manuscript.' The rest of the article supplies more direct evidence that Milton never rejected the epic for the tragedy, but with a tendency to favor the epic, kept both, and suitable themes for both, always in mind.

Accepting the usual belief that Milton's choice had for a time shifted to tragedy, we may variously conjecture why he returned to the epic. Early in his plans he must have foreseen a serious difficulty—if we rightly ascribe to him a passion for purity of form. From drafts and outlines in the Cambridge Manuscript, one sees that Milton's dramatic scheme involved the appearance of numerous personified abstractions like 'Conscience in a shape,' Discontent, Justice, Mercy, Wisdom, Hatred, Envy, Heat, Tempest, and Famine. Such materialized conceptions, of course, suggest the moralities and mystery plays of the Middle Ages rather than the classical drama. Possibly an unwelcome discovery that he was about to entangle two dramatic forms—the Greek to which he desired to hold, and the mediaeval into which he seemed to be forced—helped at this time to turn Milton away from tragedy. The mixture certainly would have offended his taste. Moreover, as details and episodes in the fable began to shape themselves, and to reveal their content to his imagination, the brevity and the concreteness of tragedy must have seemed less appropriate to his theme. From the nature of this theme, he had to meet two exactions: he must repeatedly achieve sublimity of treatment, and he must constantly avoid the grotesque. But his problem was not new in kind, and the

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[1] See Phillips, *Life of Milton*, in *Of Education* [etc.], ed. by Lockwood, p. lxxv: 'This subject was first designed a tragedy, and in the Fourth Book of the poem there are six [sic] verses, which, several years before the poem was begun, were shown to me and some others as designed for the very beginning of the said tragedy.' Here Phillips quotes *Paradise Lost* 4. 32–41.

Italian commentators, who at this period must have been familiar to him, had discussed it to advantage. They had worked with Aristotle's statements on 'the necessary or the probable' and 'the marvelous' in the plot of tragedy,[1] and they warned dramatists against introducing the supernatural. On this point they contrasted the restrictions of a play with the freedom of an epic. In Tasso's discourse on the epic Milton would find much assistance toward a solution of his difficulty; for Tasso rigorously excluded superhuman agents from tragedy, and by these he meant something more than the objectionable *deus ex machina.* But, while he banned such agents as destructive of the proper tragic effect, he unreservedly commended them, and other things at once credible and marvelous, for their power to induce the true epic effect. In the epic they would cause, not pity and fear—and here the reasoning is not un-Aristotelian—but 'instructive wonder'; and by the arousal of 'instructive wonder' the ends of the epic were realized.[2] Castelvetro had a different emphasis, yet corroborated this view. He conceived of an epic immensity, and a scene of events, 'raised to the heavens, and lowered to the infernal regions'—as it were, 'diffused through earth, sea, and air.'[3] Earlier in his commentary, too, he approved that aspect of the poet's invention, which, in the leisurely movement of the fable, not only 'reveals the secrets of the human mind, but penetrates below, and flies above into the heavens, and searches into the heart of God.'[4]

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[1] Cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 15.1454$^a$34; 24.1460$^a$11–17 (ed. by Bywater, pp. 43, 77).

[2] See below, pp. 138-139.

[3] *Poetica d'Aristotele*, p. 535.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

To supplement these and similar opinions that Milton found in the theorists, the concrete example also was before him; he could not have read heedlessly the Continental poems on his chosen subject; and something in the *Adamus Exsul* of Grotius, the *Adamo* of Andreini, or the *Lucifer* of Vondel, or, on the contrary, something in the *Christiad* of Vida, the *Sepmaine* or the *Seconde Semaine* of Du Bartas, or the *Sette Giornate* of Tasso, may have turned the balance in favor of narrative poetry as the vehicle of his theme.

These, conceivably, were among the influences by which, after a time of indecision, Milton was led to embody his great conception in a narrative poem. He aimed at an exquisite adjustment between structure and substance, and determined that his ultimate expression should be a perfect union of beautiful parts in a perfect and beautiful form. This aim tragedy endangered, and the epic, in his hands, secured.

Milton, looking ahead, weighed and experimented before he chose; his modern critics, looking back, see that the choice was inevitable. Theoretically, they say, he could not have done otherwise. Yet to the theory that guided him they add few principles or none. His fable depends to a high degree upon the appeal of a great variety of episodes; his lofty theme requires divine agencies, and in its presentation a vastness of background incompatible with the concreteness of the drama. But these implications were already understood. Milton found them in the Italian theorists whom he studied; and *Paradise Lost*, although it is a source of new creative principles, is quite as obviously an illustration of principles long since abstracted and set down.

Nevertheless, however guided by precedent and confident of purpose, Milton, like Dante,[1] Ariosto,[2] and Spenser,[3] announces that his journey is into an untrodden realm. He is to recount

> Things unattempted yet in prose or rime,[4]

and, under an inward and celestial illumination, to

> see and tell
> Of things invisible to mortal sight.[5]

His early inclinations or intentions are altered; he has turned away from the deeds of warlike heroes, the prowess of their races and games, the 'long and tedious havoc' of their battles, from the 'tinsel trappings' of chivalry, and all the gorgeous paraphernalia of romance.[6] He finds he is neither inclined by nature nor fitted by study to treat of these things, and as his subject-matter appears to him greater than they,

[1] Cf. *Paradiso* 2.6:

> L'acqua ch' io prendo giammai non si corse.

Trans. by Butler:

> Over the water which I take none ever sped.

[2] Cf. *Orlando Furioso* 1.2.1–2:

> Dirò d'Orlando in un medesmo tratto
> Cosa non detta in prosa mai, nè in rima.

*P. L.* 1.16 is a close translation of Ariosto's second line.

[3] Cf. *Faerie Queene* 6, Prologue 2. Spenser invokes

> Ye sacred imps, that on Parnasso dwell,

and asks them to guide and conduct him

> In these strange waies, where never foote did use,
> Ne none can find, but who was taught them by the Muse.

[4] *P. L.* 1.16.

[5] *P. L.* 3.54–55.

[6] Among the gaudy details rejected by Milton as unsuited to the heroic poem, one in particular long before his day had incurred the censure of a theorist, and more recently had been scorned by a poet full of romantic lore. Milton's list of subjects unfit for his high argument,

in so far does he regard his first epic[1] as removed from the trend of classic and Italian tradition in which they had been fostered.

Here we may pause to mark the relation between Milton's concept of epic subject-matter and the quarrel already begun in France between 'the ancients and the moderns'; a quarrel with confused issues, from which arose problems as diverse as the identity of Homer, and the rival claims to superiority of pagan and Christian letters. Until the sojourn of St. Evremond in London, Englishmen showed no interest in the dispute, and Milton certainly cannot be ranked as a 'modern'; yet his poems may well be cited as illustrious examples of the doctrine promulgated by the modern faction in this academic quarrel. We readily connect his innovations in epical content with the desire of such a man as Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin to see his national literature given over to Christian themes, and the celebration of Christian virtues. As Milton contrasted the passions of the Greek gods and heroes, the wrath of Achilles,

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includes a reference to the

marshaled feast
Served up in hall with sewers and senechals.

Longinus (*On the Sublime* 43, ed. by Rhys Roberts, p. 153) had pleaded for the omission of just such things from elevated passages, and Spenser had been conscious of a certain impropriety in admitting their description into serious writing (*Faerie Queene* 5.3.3):

To tell the glorie of the feast that day
The goodly service, the deviceful sights,

. . . . . . . . .

The royall banquets, and the rare delights,
Were worke fit for an herauld, not for me:
But for so much as to my lot here lights,
That with this present treatise doth agree,
True vertue to advance, shall here recounted bee.

[1] See also *P. R.* 1. 14–17.

the rage of Turnus, and the ire of Neptune and Juno, with the unsung

> better fortitude
> Of patience and heroic martyrdom,[1]

so Desmarets, in the Preface to his poem, *Marie-Magdeleine* (1669), contrasted the monsters that Hercules subdued with the worldly pride that hero never so much as attacked. The French poet might indeed have found matter for reflection in *Comus*, where the attendant spirit says:

> 'Tis not vain or fabulous,
> (Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)
> What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,
> Storied of old in high immortal verse
> Of dire Chimeras and enchanted isles,
> And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;
> For such there be, but unbelief is blind.[2]

But without trying to correct Desmaret's misconception, we may admit that the French moderns were partly right in taking Milton as an illustration of their principles.

Insistent as Milton was on the peculiar qualities of his great work, he does not analyze or, except indirectly, classify it. It is to him a heroic poem, by its subject-matter more justly entitled to that name than many of its predecessors, and he is content thus to allude to it.[3] But what contented him did not content his critics, and some tedious efforts have been made to find a better description. These efforts Addison, in opening his first essay on *Paradise Lost*, thus helps us to dismiss:

> There is nothing in nature so irksome as general discourses, especially when they turn chiefly upon words. For this reason I shall waive the

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[1] *P. L.* 9.31–32.
[2] *Comus* 513–519.
[3] See The Verse, *Poetical Works*, p. 180, and also *P. L.* 9.14, 25–29.

> discussion of that point which was started some years since, whether Milton's *Paradise Lost* may be called an heroic poem. Those who will not give it that title may call it, if they please, a divine poem. It will be sufficient to its perfection if it has in it all the beauties of the highest kind of poetry; and as for those who allege it is not an heroic poem, they advance no more to the diminution of it than if they should say Adam is not Aeneas, nor Eve, Helen.[1]

Certainly this is true. No harm is done to Milton's epic by refusing it a label, but we need the caution against forcing it into the classic mold, or trying to make it square with traditional theory. As already suggested, in renouncing the conventional subject-matter of both heroic and romantic narrative poetry, Milton weakens his allegiance to any established system.

Having read Milton's new purpose in his own words, we wish to know his opinion regarding the function of the epic as a literary type. With his care for essential distinctions, he cannot have followed those Italian authorities who enlarged upon Aristotle's theory of the narrative poem by a mere repetition of items in his theory of the drama. Minturno, for example, in a definition modeled phrase by phrase upon Aristotle's definition of tragedy, implies an exact coincidence in subject-matter and in function between tragedy and the epic.[2] In such a view Milton would have no confidence; but we may profitably recall his high regard for the criticism of Tasso. To Tasso's clear reason, it was illogical that two types of composition so unlike as tragedy and the epic, not only in the mode and the means of imitation, but also in the objects imitated, should fulfil identical ends. While he allows that pity and fear may sometimes contribute to the effect of the epic, he does not believe their presence, still less their *catharsis*, essential.[1] Rather, he shows that it is the function of the epic to produce, within the limits of 'verisimilitude,' an instructive wonder.[2] True, Minturno likewise had said that the events of an epic must, whatever their nature, awaken wonder;[3] and Mazzoni had characterized poetry in general as dealing with the wonderful in a credible manner.[4] But while the remarks of Minturno and Mazzoni have an Aristotelian flavor, they lack Aristotle's directness and precision. Tasso alone, I believe, made the arousal of instructive wonder, or profit through amazement, the peculiar test of the epic. However, although the theory of Tasso was one to which Milton might have subscribed, we have no positive evidence that he did so. Adam and Eve, indeed, listen to the narrative of Raphael with 'admiration and deep muse'[5] as to 'great things and full of wonder.'[6] But, though in a sense they here react as ideal auditors, their reaction can hardly be said to show the special effect of epic poetry; for the epic poet does not always recite, as did the 'divine historian,'

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[1] *Spectator*, No. 267, Jan. 5, 1712; see *Addison on P. L.*, ed. by Cook, p. 1.

[2] Cf. *L'Arte Poetica*, Bk. 1, p. 9.

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[1] *Dell' Arte Poetica*, Discorso 1, p.206.

[2] Cf. '*Del Poema Eroico*, Bk. 1, p. 20: 'Diremo dunque che il poema eroico sia imitatore d'azione illustre, grande, e perfetta tutta; narrando con altissimo verso, a fine di muovere gli animi colla maraviglia, e di giovare in questa guisa.' Cf. also *Dell' Arte Poetica*, Discorso 1, p. 202: 'Ma benchè io stringa il poeta epico ad un obbligo perpetuo di servare il verisimile, non però escludo da lui d'altre parte, cioè il meraviglioso, anzi giudico che un' azione medesima possa essere e meraviglioso e verisimile, e molti credo che siano i modi di congiungere insieme queste qualità così discordanti.'

[3] *L'Arte Poetica*, Bk. 1. p. 40.

[4] *Difesa di Dante* (Bk. 3, chap. 3) 1.575.

[5] *P. L.* 7.52.

[6] *P. L.* 7.70.

'things unsearchable,' 'far differing from this world,' and so high and strange that, to ordinary thought, they are unimaginable. The description it is true, in large measure applies to the fable of *Paradise Lost* or *Paradise Regained*; but perhaps we should argue only that 'admiration' or 'wonder' was one element in the effect Milton aimed at in parts of his work. Of course the opening of *Paradise Lost* (1.24–26) shows that he aimed also at instruction.

Let us turn from function to structure. However Milton decided the question he put in *The Reason of Church-Government*—whether the rules of Aristotle were strictly to be kept, or nature followed—he consciously deferred to the laws of narrative poetry. He was not, for example, to be swerved by the neo-classic heresy of Castelvetro, or any other lenient theorist, from the precepts in the twenty-third chapter of the *Poetics*. There Aristotle had written of the epic:

> Its stories . . . should be based on a single action, one that is a complete whole in itself, with a beginning, middle, and end. . . . Herein . . . we have a further proof of Homer's marvelous superiority to the rest. He did not attempt to deal even with the Trojan war in its entirety, though it was a whole with a definite beginning and end—through a feeling apparently that it was too long a story to be taken in in one view, or if not that, too complicated from the variety of incident in it. As it is, he has singled out one section of the whole; many of the other incidents, however, he brings in as episodes, using the Catalogue of Ships, for instance, and other episodes to relieve the uniformity of his narrative.[1]

This, with the addition of certain stock examples, is the echo in Milton:

> As the epic poet, who adheres at all to the rules of that species of composition, does not profess to describe the whole life of the hero whom

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[1] Aristotle, *Poetics* 23.1459$^a$18 ff. (ed. by Bywater, pp. 71, 73).

> he celebrates, but only some particular action of his life, as the resentment of Achilles at Troy, the return of Ulysses, or the coming of Aeneas into Italy; so it will be sufficient either for my justification or apology, that I have heroically celebrated at least one exploit of my countrymen; I pass by the rest, for who could recite the achivements of a whole people?[1]

To the one genuinely Aristotelian rule of unity, that of the fable, which with some modification held for the epic as well as for tragedy, Milton attached due importance. Likewise he practised its corollaries and observed its special applications. Thus, in the Argument to Book One of *Paradise Lost,* there is another allusion to the laws of epic structure. But now the reminiscence is Horatian, reflecting the phraseology of its source; for Milton's poem, like Spenser's *Faerie Queene,* far from beginning *ab ovo,* 'hastes into the midst of things.'[2] Yet he tarries to propose 'first, in brief, the whole subject,' and in so doing harmonizes two familiar dicta of the critics, the second laid down by Vida:

> This as a rule the noblest bards esteem,
> To touch at first in general on the theme,
> To hint at all the subject in a line,
> And draw in miniature the whole design.[3]

The opening of *Paradise Lost,* though less direct than the opening of the *Iliad, Odyssey,* or *Aeneid,* exemplifies the simplicity advised by Horace.[4] It may betray a good deal of conscious labor, but is not inept or inflated.[5]

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[1] *2 Defence,* trans. by Fellowes, 6.446 (*Works* 6.331).

[2] Cf. Horace, *Ars Poetica* 146 ff.

[3] Vida, *De Arte Poetica* 2.17–20; trans. by Pitt.

[4] Horace, *Ars Poetica* 136 ff.

[5] See Addison, *Spectator,* No. 303, Feb. 16, 1712; in *Addison on P. L.,* ed. by Cook, p. 43: 'These lines are perhaps as plain, simple, and unadorned, as any of the whole poem, in which particular the author has conformed himself to the example of Homer and the precept of Horace.' He has conformed also to the precept of Scaliger (*Poetics* 3.96, trans. by Padelford, p. 54) 'Begin with something grand, cognate with the theme, and intimately related.'

As to the kind of verse suitable to the epic, Milton, with a fourfold precedent—classical, Italian, Spanish, and English,— decided to reject 'rime.' He dismissed it as 'no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre'; as the cause of 'vexation, hindrance, and constraint'; as 'a thing, of itself, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight'; and, finally, as 'a troublesome and modern bondage.'[1] Here is a repudiation indeed—and here, for those interested in Milton's influence on his pupils, is its faint but faithful echo:

> 'The truth is,' writes Phillips in the Preface to his *Theatrum Poetarum*, 'the use of measure alone, without any rime at all, would give far more ample scope and liberty both to style and fancy than can possibly be observed in rime; as evidently appears from an English heroic poem which came forth not many years ago, and from the style of Virgil, Horace, Ovid, and others of the Latins, which is so pure and proper, that it could not possibly have been better in prose.'[2]

Milton observes that some graceful and famous poets had been forced by rime 'to express things otherwise, and for the most part worse, than else they would have expressed them;' and in his own career there was a time when he found that even the easier requirements of metre hampered his utterance. We shall digress from the main theme of the chapter to note some of his early views on versification. Before prose had become the 'cool element' in which he exercised his 'left hand,' and before the time of his metrical experiments such as the strophic ode, *Ad Joannem Rousium*, Milton, in his seventeenth year, wrote to his former teacher,

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[1] Cf. The Verse, *Poetical Works*, p. 180.
[2] In *Crit. Essays of the Seventeenth Century* 2.266.

Thomas Young: 'The emotions of my gratitude, which your services so justly inspire, are too expansive and too warm to be expressed in the confined limits of poetical metre; they demand the unconstrained freedom of prose, or rather the exhuberant richness of Asiatic phraseology.'[1] A few years later he wrote to Charles Diodati:

Art thou desirous to be told how well
I love thee, and in verse?[2] Verse cannot tell,
For verse has bounds, and must in measure move;
But neither bounds nor measure knows by love.[3]

The protest is a familiar device with poets, who, when they say they cannot wholly express their affection, mean the denial to belie their words. Yet the conceit more often imputes insufficiency to language in general than to metrical language in particular, and hence in Milton it draws attention to the fact of his poetical apprenticeship, and reminds us that the skilled metrist of *Samson Agonistes*, with 'an ear that could measure a just cadence and scan without articulating,'[4] once toiled over the details of versification. But in maturity it was only end-rime—which, according to Dryden, never was Milton's talent, and came 'hardly' from him even in his *Juvenilia*—that could vex and bind him; and he would have resented an imputation like that of Quintilian: 'Authority is commonly sought in orators or historians; for, as to the poets, the obligation of the metre excuses their phraseology.'[1] Since to Milton, as to Longinus, beautiful words were 'in very truth the peculiar light of thought,'[2] we can not suppose that he found their power to illumine lessened by beauty of arrangement. Rime was different—and his judgment against it found ready advocates, some even expressing their assent in rimed verse! Thus Isaac Watts, in his *Adventurous Muse*:

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[1] *Epist. Fam.* 1, trans. by Fellowes, 1. i (*Works* 7.369). For the expression 'Asiatic phraseology,' and the reference to 'Asiatic exuberance' in the *Prolusion on Early Rising* (in Milton's *Commonplace Book*—see Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.304), compare Quintilian's *Institutes*, trans. by Watson, 12.10.16: 'The distinction between Attic and Asiatic orators is indeed of great antiquity; the Attics being regarded as compressed and energetic in their style, the Asiatics as inflated and deficient in force; in the Attics it was thought that nothing was redundant, in the Asiatics that judgment and restraint were in a great measure wanting.' See also Cicero, *Orator* 69, and Mazzoni, *Difesa di Dante* (Bk. 3, Chap. 70) 1. 971 ff.

[2] The Latin word is *carmine*.

[3] *Elegia* 6. 5–8, trans. by Cowper, p. 593.

[4] *An Apology*, *Works* 3.292.

> The noble hater of degenerate rime,
> Shook off the chains, and built his verse sublime,
> A monument too high for coupled sound to climb.

But in rejecting rime as no true ornament of poetical style, Milton did not imply a like attitude toward other conventional embellishments.[3] On the contrary, like the theorists before him, he gave much thought to the diction of epic poetry, and especially to questions of fitness in simile and metaphor. On this point Vida had written:

> Sometimes on little images to fall,
> And thus illustrate mighty things by small,
> With due success the licensed poet dares:
> When to the ants the Phrygians he compares,
> Who, leaving Carthage, gather to the seas,
> Or the laborious Tyrians to the bees.[4]

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[1] *Institutes*, trans. by Watson, 1.6.1.

[2] Longinus, *On the Sublime*, chap. 30, ed. by Rhys Roberts, p. 119.

[3] Milton's various references to rhetoric, among them those to diction and figure, have been included in the Illustrative Passages; see pp. 294-307.

[4] *De Arte Poetica* 2, 282–285; trans. by Pitt. Vida's phrase (1.283), 'si magna voles componere parvis,' is Virgilian, directly adapted from *Bucolics* 1.24, 'sic parvis componere magna solebam,' and *Georgics* 4.176, 'sic parva licet componere magnis.' One could not find a simpler illustration of the deduction of theory from practice.

Such daring Tasso, however, discountenanced. The poet, said he, should not use metaphors or similes in which greater things are compared to less, as thunder to the blast of the trumpet; rather let him compare smaller things to greater, as a giant to a tower.[1] With this precept Milton seems to have agreed, and he was prevented from observing it only by the unusual demands of his theme. When he has to appeal to the imagination through a concrete simile, heavenly things must needs be measured by earthly—the thunder by the trumpet. Early in *Paradise Lost* he feels the embarrassment, and indirectly prepares his reader for the necessary shifts. He is describing the militant hosts of the angels:

> For never, since created Man,
> Met such embodied force as, named with these,
> Could merit more than that small infantry
> Warred on by cranes—though all the giant brood
> Of Phlegra with the heroic race were joined
> That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side,
> Mixed with auxiliar gods; and what resounds
> In fable or romance of Uther's son
> Begirt with British and Armoric knights;
> And all who since, baptized or infidel,
> Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,
> Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond,
> Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore
> When Charlemagne with all his peerage fell
> By Fontarabbia. Thus far these beyond

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[1] *Del Poema Eroico*, Bk. 4, p. 125: 'Non dèe il poeta trasportar la metafora dalla cose minori alle maggiori, come il suono della tromba al tuono, ma dalle maggiori alle minori come il torreggiar a' giganti.' Cf. Dante, *Purgatorio* 5.14: 'Sta come torre ferma'; also 2 Sam. 22.3; Psalms 18.2, 144; 2; and other instances in the Bible.

> Compare of mortal prowess, yet observed
> Their dread Commander. He, above the rest
> In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
> Stood like a tower.[1]

Thrice in *Paradise Lost* and once in *Paradise Regained* (more as a disciple of Tasso than of Vida—that is, imitating rather than emulating Virgil), Milton explicitly notes an inequality between the terms of a comparison. The tumult and uproar that crashed upon the ear of Satan, as he stood upon the brink of hell pondering his earthward voyage;[2] the fierceness and horrible commotion of Michael's struggle with the arch-fiend;[3] the prodigious dimensions of the bridge built by Sin and Death;[4] and in *Paradise Regained* the amazement of Satan after Christ's refusal of the last temptation[5]—all four elicit from Milton a uniform statement that the accompanying similes are but a comparison of great things to small. The recurrent phrase indicates a technical formula lying in the poet's mind; the words literally translate those in which he had first seen it expressed.[6]

But in Renaissance discussions of poetical—above all, of epic—diction, stress was laid on other matters besides the respective dimensions of the objects in a comparison. The Italian theorists kept insisting upon fitness (or, in the broader sense of the word, 'decorum') in all figurative language. Thus Tasso said that Dante was not choice in his similitudes,[1] and, to illustrate the offense, cited a line (*Paradiso* 1.38) in which the sun is called 'la lucerna del mondo.' 'The poet,' wrote Tasso, ' . . . ought to select [in his figures] things that are pleasing to the sight, and to the other senses, and to avoid those that are displeasing to any of the senses; as Dante should have done, who, calling the sun *the lamp of the world*, made it seem as though one smelled the oil.'[2] Mazzoni came to Dante's defence with examples from Virgil, Horace, and others, and with the argument that in this particular case Dante elevated his image above triviality or meanness by suggesting a lamp of such magnitude that it could light the world.[3] To Milton, the discussion probably seemed futile; and Mazzoni would have made a better defence by asserting the merits of simple imagery, and of metaphors derived from familiar objects or occurrences. At all events, Milton did not scruple to proceed in defiance of Tasso, even surpassing the offence of Dante; for not only did he often speak of lamps when he meant the sun or the stars, but on one occasion he dared speak of an odorous lamp![4] Like Longinus and Wordsworth, he recognized the intrinsic value, and rich connotation, of figures derived from the objects and events of every day life. Thus from *An Apology against a Pamphlet* we learn that he did not force the critical precept that comparisons should be lofty in lofty connections: 'Doth not Christ himself teach the highest things by the similitude of old bottles and patched clothes?'[1] Writers on Milton have assailed his taste, and reproached him for mean or lowly images, but they appear to have strained the evidence, and to have adduced very little that deserves censure. Addison, considering not merely the figures of *Paradise Lost*, but its language as a whole, blames Milton for having in a few instances failed to avoid 'idiomatic ways of speaking.' Two of the three improprieties he notes are:

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[1] *P. L.* 1.573–591. Milton uses the very image suggested by Dante and by Tasso.

[2] *P. L.* 2.920–927.

[3] *P. L.* 6.296–315.

[4] *P. L.* 10.293–311.

[5] *P. R.* 4.562–571.

[6] See above, p. 143, n. 4.

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[1] See the discussion of Dante's images and expressions in R. W. Church, *Dante and Other Essays*, pp. 141–144.

[2] Tasso, *Del Poema Eroico*, Bk. 4, p. 125: 'Il poeta . . . dèe . . . scegliere da cose gratissime alla vista, et agli altri sensi, et schivar quelle, che sono spiacevoli ad alcun di loro, come doveva far Dante, il qual chiamando il sole *lucerna del mondo*, ci fè quasi sentir l'odor dell' olio.'

[3] Mazzoni, *Difesa di Dante* (Bk. 6, chap. 18) 2. 547 ff.

[4] See *Sonnet* 9.10; and cf. *Comus* 198–199.

> For this we may thank Adam,[2]

and

> No fear lest dinner cool.[3]

Warton looks askance at the phrase in the ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, 'pillows his chin,' which he considers too 'familiar,' and Keightley, though he indicates the parallel in Petrarch,[4] is inclined to agree. Keightley himself is displeased with the colloquialism of

> Juno dares not give her odds;[5]

and Hurd says of the line: 'Too lightly expressed for the occasion.' But one is tempted to reply to them all after the fashion of Sidney: 'If Cato misliked it, the noble Fulvius liked it, or else he had not done it.'[6]

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[1] *An Apology*, *Works* 3.278. Once indeed (*Works* 5.367) he suspects the propriety of one of his own comparisons, but because he believes it 'too low' rather than too simple.

[2] *P. L.* 10.736.

[3] *P. L.* 5.396.

[4] Vedi . . . il sole
Giè fuor dell 'oceano infino al petto.
*Trionfo della Castità*, terz. 60. (Keightley's note.)

[5] *Arcades* 23.

[6] *An Apology for Poetry*, in *Eliz. Crit. Essays* 1.189.

In considering Milton's theory of the epic and epic adornments, we should not overlook his use of allegory and personification. In his own 'heroic song,' a developed allegory appears in the episode of Sin and Death; and Chaos, Night, Rumor, Chance, Tumult, Confusion, and Discord are all introduced as more or less distinct personages.[1] But his references to allegory are infrequent. He succinctly characterized it as narrative

> Where more is meant than meets the ear.[2]

He valued it as an energetic artistic device: 'O, Sir, if we could but see the shape of our dear mother England, as poets are wont to give a personal form to what they please.'[3] And, finally, he was irritated by forced and untimely allegorical interpretations: 'Or else they would strain us out a certain figurative prelate, by wringing the collective allegory of those seven angels into seven single rochets.'[4] These are his only comments.[5]

It is idle to speculate how much interest Milton took in the ingenious reconciliation, by the Italian critics, of the

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[1] In the four drafts for a drama on the subject of Adam and Eve (cf. Masson, *Life of Milton* 2.106–108) Milton introduces the figures of Conscience, Labor, Sickness, Discontent, Ignorance, Faith, Hope, Charity, Justice, Mercy, Wisdom, Heavenly Love, the Evening Star Hesperus, Grief, Hatred, Envy, War, Famine, Pestilence, Winter, Heat, Tempest, etc. In *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* this sort of thing has largely disappeared.

[2] *Il. Pens.* 120.

[3] *Reformation* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.45.

[4] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 1, chap. 5), *Works* 3.119–120.

[5] Cf. *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 2, chap. 13), trans. by Sumner, 2.400. Here Milton sets a value upon certain figurative devices. Though allegory is not mentioned among them, it is permissible to add it to a list containing parables, hyperboles and apologues. These modes of speech, he contends, are not to be classified as falsehoods, their object being, not deception, but instruction.

Aristotelian requirement of 'verisimilitude' in poetry with the incredible or impossible aspects of allegory. Mazzoni, in particular, justified the use of allegories in the epic, because of the credible figurative meaning that lay beneath their literal impossibilities, and thought he discovered a positive justification for his view in Aristotle. In a passage less remarkable as an interpretation of classical theory than as a determined effort to secure the classical guarantee, Mazzoni finds support for his opinion in *Poetics* 24.1460$^a$ 34 ff., where Aristotle countenances an improbable incident in the *Odyssey*: 'I say that in the opinion of Aristotle the unsuitable things [*le cose sconvenevoli*] that appear in the literal meaning of this passage disappear because of the beauty of the allegorical meaning.'[1] Though not directly noticed by Milton, this critical problem is mentioned in Phillips' *Theatrum Poetarum*; and as before, we may supplement what little is said by the poet himself with a passage from his nephew:

> It is not a mere historical relation spiced over with a little slight fiction, now and then a personated virtue or vice rising out of the ground, and uttering a speech, which makes a heroic poem. But it must be rather a brief, obscure, or remote tradition, but of some remarkable piece of story, in which the poet hath an ample field to enlarge by feigning of profitable circumstances; in which, and in proper allegory, invention (the well management whereof is indeed no other than decorum[2]) principally consisteth; and wherein there is a kind of truth even in the midst of fiction. For whatever is pertinently said by way of allegory, is morally, though not historically, true; and circumstances, the more they have of verisimility, the more they keep up the reputation of the poet, whose business it is to deliver feigned things as like to truth as may be; that is

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[1] Mazzoni, *Difesa di Dante*, (Bk. 3, chap. 42) 1. 843.

[2] Note the inclusive use of the term, and compare pp. 109 ff.

to say, not too much exceeding apprehension, or the belief of what is possible or likely, or positively contradictory to the truth of history.[1]

The passage contains at least a reminiscence of the Italian commentaries read by Phillips under his uncle's supervision, and in the pupil's thought there may well be an emphasis originally derived from his teacher. At all events, Milton doubtless had in mind some such justification of the allegory when, as Addison says, he interwove 'in the texture of his fable some particulars which do not seem to have probability enough for an epic poem, particularly in the actions which he ascribes to Sin and Death, and the picture which he draws of the Limbo of Vanity.'[2]

Finally, we come to Milton's opinion regarding the share to be taken by the writer himself in his narrative. In the *Poetics* (24.1460$^a$ 5–11) Aristotle commends Homer for realizing that 'the poet should say very little *in propria persona*.' The Italians were not so exacting. Minturno, Mazzoni, Castelvetro, and Tasso, each in his own way, allow the epic writer to break the course of the story with utterances in his own person. According to Tasso, the poet may blame, praise, comment, and, in doubtful cases, point out the virtuous way. According to Castelvetro, likewise, he may admonish or warn, and, in the rôle of narrator, may tell of past or future events. But Milton assumed a still larger privilege; he granted the poet leave to speak not only as himself but of himself. In *The Reason of Church-Government* there are a few pages of biography in the course of which he says:

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[1] Preface to *Theatrum Poetarum*, in *Crit. Essays of the Seventeenth Century* 2.267–268.

[2] *Spectator*, No. 297, Feb. 9, 1712; see *Addison on P. L.*, ed. by Cook, p. 36.

> For although a poet soaring in the high region of his fancies, with his garland and singing-robes about him, might without apology speak more of himself than I mean to do, yet for me sitting here below in the cool element of prose . . . to venture and divulge unusual things of myself, I shall petition to the gentler sort it may not be envy to me.[1]

Holding such a view, Milton naturally took a further step, and allowed the poet in his verse frequently to express a personal opinion. And here again, his practice is censured by Addison:

> In the structure of his poem [*Paradise Lost*] he has likewise admitted of too many digressions. It is finely observed by Aristotle that the author of an heroic poem should seldom speak himself, but throw as much of his work as he can into the mouths of those who are his principle actors. . . . Digressions are by no means to be allowed of in an epic poem. If the poet, even in the ordinary course of his narrative, should speak as little as possible, he should certainly never let his narration sleep for the sake of any reflections of his own.[2]

A little farther on Addison gives a list of passages, such as Milton's 'complaint for his blindness' and his 'panegyric on marriage,' where presumably, in the critic's view the epic fable sleeps.

An attempt to indicate the authorities Milton deferred to in shaping his epical theory will now enable us, in spite of scanty data, to make a few generalizations.[3] Much of the classical teaching that applied to narrative poetry as an organic structure, Milton followed—to some of it he alluded. From the Italian theorists he selected what he found useful in attaining his special end, but he never allowed their rules to hamper his invention. He familiarized himself with their views of 'decorum,' 'verisimilitude,' and poetic diction; he accepted this convention and rejected that. He was guided by Tasso in many particulars, but not in so important a matter as the outcome of the epic story, which according to the Italian critic was more properly joyous than painful. He selected his hero without help from the classical tradition; for he no more followed the models in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* than the injunction of Tasso that the epic poet should imitate the deeds of magnanimous heroes. In short, from the theory and practice of the past, Milton took all that could refine the gold of his new epical invention, and with the steady hand of a great artificer cast a new form. Whether he be called a classicist or a child of the Renaissance, whether he observed the ancients through the eyes of the Italian theorists, or, looking straight through Mediaevalism, regarded antiquity first for himself, and then steadied his view by a wide reading of critical literature, one thing is plain: he was reverent toward a rich inheritance, and understood the conservatism that is maintained at no cost to freedom. But there is, of course, a balance in Milton between old and new. Like other great poets, he to some extent preceded criticism; and no modern theorist could disregard *Paradise Lost* as a source from which to derive laws for the guidance of the so-called literary epic. We have found Milton looking both before and after; taking from the past, and offering to the future. The interesting thing is to consider how far he should be regarded as a great intermediary, and how far as an inspired innovator; how far his originality took him to origins, and how far it made him a fountain-head for others. Perhaps an exact conclusion is impossible; but to adapt his own words, and say that he bettered what he borrowed, is to recognize one of the greatest elements in his genius—and to call him original in the highest sense of the term.

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[1] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works*, 3. 143–144.

[2] *Spectator*, No. 297, Feb. 9, 1712; see *Addison on P. L.*, ed. by Cook, pp. 37 ff.

[3] Cf. E. N. S. Thompson, *Essays on Milton*, especially *Epic Structure of Paradise Lost*, for much valuable material on Milton's epical theory.

# CHAPTER VI

## MILTON'S IDEAL POET

'Poetas equidem vere dictos et diligo et colo, et audiendo saepissime delector,'[1] writes Milton, and, in describing the true poet, he epitomizes his theory of fine art, and gives the crowning expression of his humanism. His ideal is one of beauty and strength, elevated and magnanimous; for in Milton's eyes the poet before all else is an inspired interpreter, standing midway between the people and a great vision, and measuring the excellence of his art by its contribution to human welfare. In his endowment there must be combined three qualities: an original bent, an ability for steady and accurate observation, and a capacity for sustained application. By the Hellenism or humanism in Milton's estimate, the poet is vitally connected with society. But his consecration to mankind brings with it a right to many hours of musing, and many years of that 'learned and liberal leisure,' which in Milton's opinion is 'nutritive to . . . genius and conservative of its good health';[2] he comes to the active life of society from a kingdom of God established within himself. In youth he is dedicated to study, observation, and thought; throughout his life, to the speculative activity that issues, as Dante said of Saint Bernard, in a 'lively charity.'[3]

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[1] *2 Defence, Works* 6.273. Trans. by Fellowes, 6.387: 'True poets are the objects of my reverence and my love, and the constant sources of my delight.'

[2] *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.456–457, trans. by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.297.

[3] 'Vivace carità.' See *Paradiso* 31.109–110.

With this general notion of the poet in mind, we turn to examine his training. To begin with, he is allowed by Milton his dreams upon Parnassus, for, like other men, the poet passes through his acts or ages; as he contemplates his boyish visions

On summer eves by haunted stream,[1]

or in 'trim gardens'[2] holds youthful converse with the Muse, he is but stamping upon an early scene the rare and exquisite shape of its 'decorum.' Touched with a dignity not always accorded to the immature—but a dignity as spirited as it is gracious, for Milton's bard could interpose 'a cheerful hour,' and waste, or even 'drench in mirth,' 'a sullen day'—the youth of the ideal poet is a beautiful and inviolate period.[3] Of his own indulgence in the leisure cherished by artists and wise men since the world began, Milton speaks in the seventh of his *Prolusiones Oratoriae*:

> This I would fain believe to be the divine sleep of Hesiod; these to be Endymion's nightly meetings with the moon;[4] this to be that retirement of Prometheus, under the guidance of Mercury, to the deepest solitudes of Mount Caucasus, where he became the wisest of gods and men, so that even Jupiter himself is said to have gone to consult him about the marriage of Thetis. I call to witness for myself the groves and rivers, and the beloved village-elms, under which in the last past summer (if it is right to speak the secrets of the goddesses) I remember

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[1] *L'All.* 130.

[2] *Il Pens.* 50.

[3] See *Elegia* 6. 55–78, where the austere and simple life appropriate to the writer of heroic poems is described.

[4] Cf. Letter to a Friend (1632? 1633?), in Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.324: 'If you think . . . that too much love of learning is in fault, and that I have given up myself to dream away my years in the arms of studious retirement, like Endymion with the Moon, as the tale of Latmus goes.' Compare Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 10.8 (trans. by Welldon, p. 341), where the myth of Endymion's sleep is differently employed, in illustration of complete inactivity.

> with such pleasure the supreme delight I had with the Muses; where I, too, amid rural scenes and sequestered glades, seemed as if I could have vegetated through a hidden eternity.[1]

To the 'incomparable youth'[2] of the poet belong also admirations, not less real because transient, and aspirations which were the forerunners of achievement. Milton, it seems, put away childish things with a gentle hand, and remembered with Sidney that 'most men are childish in the best things till they be cradled in their graves,' and yet also with Dante that 'it is meet both to speak and to act differently at different ages.' He writes:

> I had my time, Readers, as others have, who have good learning bestowed upon them, to be sent to those places where the opinion was it might be soonest attained; and, as the manner is, was not unstudied in those authors which are most commended; whereof some were grave orators and historians, whose matter methought I loved indeed, but as my age then was, so I understood them. Others were the smooth elegiac poets, whereof the schools are not scarce. Whom, both for the pleasing sound of their numerous writing, which in imitation I found most easy, and most agreeable to nature's part in me, and for their matter, which what it is there be few who know not, I was so allured to read, that no recreation came to me better welcome. For that it was then those years with me which are excused though they be least severe, I may be saved the labor to remember ye.

And now the apology strikes a lofty note, for Milton reveres the young poet's ambition:

> When, [he continues,] having observed them to account it the chief glory of their wit, in that they were ablest to judge, to praise, and by that could esteem themselves worthiest to love, those high perfections which under one or other name they took to celebrate, I thought with myself

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[1] *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.457, trans. by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1. 297–298.

[2] Cf. *Bucer: Divorce,* (To the Parliament), *Works* 4.293. The expression shows Milton's pleasure in the gracious boyhood of Edward VI.

> by every instinct and presage of nature, which is not wont to be false, that what emboldened them to this task might, with such diligence as they used, embolden me; and that what judgment, wit, or elegance was my share would herein best appear, and best value itself, by how much more wisely and with more love of virtue I should choose (let rude ears be absent) the object of not unlike praises. For albeit these thoughts to some will seem virtuous and commendable, to others only pardonable, to a third sort perhaps idle, yet the mentioning of them now will end in serious. Nor blame it, Readers, in those years to propose to themselves such a reward as the noblest dispositions above other things in this life have sometimes preferred.[1] Whereof not to be sensible, when good and fair in one person meet, argues both a gross and shallow judgment, and withal an ungentle and swainish breast.[2]

But the industrious leisure of the youthful poet, his dreams of accomplishment and of fame, in all likelihood even his early attempts at the making of verse, were regarded by Milton as merely the 'delightful intermissions' that varied the hours of mental discipline, and relieved 'the continual plodding and wearisomeness' without which 'no worthy enterprise can be done';[3] for it was by devoted labor and study that the poet made ready for the work of his life. The curriculum proposed in the tractate *Of Education*, however exacting and comprehensive, aimed at nothing more than to fit 'poor striplings' to become honorable citizens;[4] and Milton must certainly have thought an even more severe and liberal discipline essential to the young poet, who, a spirit 'elect above the rest,' was to become through his art a leader of his fellows. If the orator, moreover, dealing with temporary and particular interests, must, as we learn from one of the Prolusions, be 'instructed, and finished with a certain circular subsidy of all the arts and all science,'[1] how much more the poet, who deals with universal and eternal truth.

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[1] Cf. *Lycidas* 70–71.

[2] *An Apology, Works* 3.269–270.

[3] *Tetrachordon* (Gen. 2. 18), *Works* 4.155.

[4] See the account given by Phillips of the study done by himself and his brother under Milton's direction, *Life of Milton*, in *Of Education* [etc.], ed. by Lockwood, pp. lxv ff.

Because Milton so early became assured of his own purpose in life, and prepared himself with a single mind for its accomplishment, what he says of his elementary education, and of his more mature studies, should indicate the sort of training to which he would subject the poet. From abundant autobiographical data, we select a few passages. The first discloses Milton's eagerness for such universal learning as Scaliger ascribed to Virgil, or as Wordsworth had in mind when he called poetry 'the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, . . . the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science.'[2] It is taken from Milton's versified epistle to his father:

> To sum the whole, whate'er the heaven contains,
> The earth beneath it, and the air between,
> The rivers and the restless deep, may all
> Prove intellectual gain to me, my wish
> Concurring with thy will; Science herself,
> All cloud removed, inclines her beauteous head,
> And offers me the lip, if dull of heart
> I shrink not, and decline her gracious boon.[3]

This courageous educational programme we may supplement by the youthful Milton's exhortation to fearless and unremitting diligence:

> If from boyhood we allow no day to pass without its lessons and diligent study, if in art we wisely omit what is foreign, superfluous,

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[1] *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.456, trans. by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.297.
[2] Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), *Prose Works*, ed. by Knight, 1.62.
[3] *Ad Patrem* 86–92, trans. by Cowper, p. 607.

useless,[1] then certainly within the age of Alexander the Great we shall have made a greater and more glorious conquest than that of the globe, and so far shall we be from accusing the brevity of life or the fatigue of knowledge, that I believe we shall be readier, like him of old, to weep and sob that there remain no more worlds for us to conquer.[2]

In *The Second Defence of the People of England,* Milton speaks of his studious life at Horton after he left Cambridge: 'On my father's estate . . . I enjoyed an interval of uninterrupted leisure, which I entirely devoted to the perusal of the Greek and Latin classics.'[3] And in *An Apology against a Pamphlet,* he tells of the riper years in which 'the ceasless round of study and reading' led him to 'the shady spaces of philosophy,' and of the training 'in the precepts of Christian religion' which was his from the days of his 'earliest capacity.'[4] Though he had long since taken 'labor and intent study'[5] to be his portion in life, their full circle is not as yet completed to his satisfaction, when, in 1642, (following a passage already cited[6]) he writes concerning his 'highest hope' and its 'hardest attempting':

> Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth, or the vapors of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amorist, or the trencher-fury of a riming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren daughters; but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar to touch and purify the lips of whom He

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[1] Milton constantly advocated an intelligent selection among studies. Cf. below, p. 160.

[2] *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.467; trans. by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.302.

[3] *2 Defence,* trans. by Fellowes, 6.401 (*Works* 6.287).

[4] *An Apology, Works* 3.272.

[5] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.144.

[6] See above pp. 127-128.

> pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading,[1] steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs, till which in some measure be compassed, at mine own peril and cost I refuse not to sustain this expectation from as many as are not loath to hazard so much credulity upon the best pledges that I can give them.[2]

And, lastly, in *The Defence of the People of England,* Milton sums up his devoted, lifelong effort: 'From my very youth I have been bent extremely upon such sort of studies as inclined me, if not to do great things myself, at least to celebrate those that did.'[3] In a sense, then, he believes the finest poetry to be the outgrowth of experience—not of what usually is called experience, but of that imaginative insight largely won through sympathetic study, and perfected by the contemplation which dilates

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[1] Cf. *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.466. Trans. by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.301: 'One shall know the arts that are useful, and how rightly to select what is useful in the arts. How many despicable trifles there are, in the first place, among grammarians and rhetoricians!' And see the reference to 'the lost labor of much unprofitable reading,' *Hirelings, Works* 5.358.

[2] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.148–149. See Phillips, Preface to *Theatrum Poetarum,* in *Crit. Essays of the the Seventeenth Century* 2.268–269: 'Indeed, there is no ingenuous or excellent quality, either native or acquired, wherewith he [the poet] should not be fully acquainted; no part of learning in which he ought not to be exactly instructed; since, as a curious piece of history-painting, which is the highest perfection in the art of picture, is the result of several other arts, as perspective, proportion, the knowledge of history, morality, the passions of the mind, etc., so heroic poesy ought to be the result of all that can be contrived, of profit, delight, or ornament, either from experience in human affairs, or from the knowledge of all arts and sciences: it being but requisite that the same work which sets forth the highest acts of kings and heroes, should be made fit to allure the inclinations of such like persons to a studious delight in reading of those things which whey are desired to imitate.'

[3] *1 Defence, Works* 8.3. And note in *2 Defence,* trans. by Fellowes, 6.392–393. (*Works* 6.278–279), the following passage: 'He alone is worthy of the appelation [great] who either does great things, or teaches how they may be done, or describes them with a suitable majesty when they have been done. But those only are great things which tend to render life more happy, which increase the innocent comforts and enjoyments of existence, or which pave the way to a state of future bliss more permanent and more pure.'

> Our spirits to the size of that they contemplate.

The habit of contemplation is, indeed, the chief trait in Milton's ideal of the poet, and in order to understand the ideal we must examine the concept. In the seventeenth century 'contemplation' retained much of the force that the word *theoria* had for Aristotle, and that in the Middle Ages was given to certain terms in the *Convivio* and in the *Paradiso*—above all in the descriptions of Beatrice and Saint Bernard. Not only does Dante regard contemplation as a supreme and ultimate good, but he joins the noblest contemplative and the noblest active life in such a way that either may assume the function of the other. Thus Beatrice leaves the Rose of Heaven to direct the footsteps of her poet; Saint Bernard takes 'on him freely the office of teacher';[1] and Matilda symbolizes the highest activity not less by rejoicing in the works of the Lord than by solving the doubts of humanity. In like fashion Milton made a perfect adjustment between poetical and speculative activity. To him, as to Dante, the greatest good of the intellect was contemplation of the divine,[2] and all the avenues to happiness were shut to the man who could not contemplate ’ἰδέας,[3] on the one hand, and 'created things,'[4] on the other. But in seeing also that the ideal life of the poet, though formed by quiet years of study, is rather refined than contaminated by occasional service in the State, and by adding to this usefulness the unremitting, though less conscious, function of an exalted teacher, Milton reproduced the entire mediaeval concept. Like Dante, he found the right balance between a life of contemplation and a life of activity, and solved a problem that has troubled the peace of lesser men. Even as early as that remarkable document just quoted, the college exercise in support of the liberal arts, he had reached the solution. Man is created of a divine substance; while on earth, he is, as it were, a heavenly visitor; and he is to return to his fatherland. It therefore seems to Milton that nothing can work for man's delight except that which in some manner touches both eternity and this temporal, civil life—and that thing is contemplation. By virtue of contemplation, the mind, wrapped in itself, counterfeits ('*imitatur*') the eternity of the immortal gods with incredible joy.[1] Here Milton makes the bridge over which the poet may freely pass from one kingdom to another; for this very contemplation is unfruitful and displeasing, is indeed nothing, if unaccompanied by art. Thus art, in its broadest sense, is recognized as the activity through which the contemplative life reaches fruition. In this way the mediaeval tradition is revivified; and the argument of Aristotle, by which a life of pure contemplation is shown to be most akin to the life of God, is rather adapted by Milton to a particular set of circumstances than in any sense contradicted. The essence of art is creative activity, and Milton implies that this activity emanates in perfection from long study—that is, from speculative activity or contemplation. On the other hand, because his poetic ideal is humanistic, he approaches the question from the contrary side, and assumes that bereft of an outward manifestation in the arts, contemplation is nothing.[1]

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[1] *Paradiso* 32.2.

[2] Cf. *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 1, chap. 33), trans. by Sumner, 2.231; *Prolus.* 3, *Works* 7.429–430, trans. by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.282; and *P. L.* 10.724.

[3] Cf. *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.459, trans. by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.299.

[4] Cf. *P. L.* 5.511.

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[1] Cf. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 10.8, trans. by Welldon, pp. 340–341.

It is possible to go still deeper into Milton's views. In *Eikonoclastes* he tells the story of the solemn debate at the court of Darius, the object of which was to determine 'what thing was to be counted strongest of all other.' Zorobabel, prince of the captive Jews, proved that 'neither wine nor women, nor the king, but Truth, of all other things was the strongest.' Milton's comment gives the essence of his opinion regarding the spheres of activity and contemplation, and shows how the wisdom of the one becomes the strength of the other:

> For me, . . . I shall pronounce my sentence somewhat different from Zorobabel; and shall defend that either Truth and Justice are all one—for Truth is but Justice in our knowledge, and Justice is but Truth in our practice— . . . or else, if there be any odds, that Justice, though not stronger than Truth, yet by her office is to put forth and exhibit more strength in the affairs of mankind. For Truth is properly no more than Contemplation, and her utmost efficiency is but teaching; but Justice, in her very essence, is all strength and activity, and hath a sword put into her hand, to use against all violence and oppression on the earth.[2]

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[1] Milton's estimate of the respective values of activity and contemplation, as preparatory to a noble service that may express either, is illustrated in *Paradise Regained.* Satan, as always, holds the perverse view, and tries to deceive the Saviour by representing to him that the world with its 'empires,' 'monarchs' and 'radiant courts,' is the 'best school' of 'greatest actions.' (3.237–238). But Mary knows that a life

Private, unactive, calm, contemplative,

was the right prelude to the ministry of Christ (2.81); and it was 'with holiest meditations fed' (2.110–111) that he

Into himself descended, and at once
All his great work to come before him set.

[2] *Eikonoclastes* (28), *Works* 3.517. The passage helps to explain the significance of the two qualities chosen in *Paradise Lost* (4.296) to

From this it would appear that teaching of some sort is the one exercise permanently consonant with a life of contemplation. The inference is easily reconciled with the passage in the seventh *Prolusion*. The fruition of the contemplative life is in art, and its efficiency is in teaching. Whenever the artist and teacher are one, life may come to perfection. And where can they more easily unite than in the poet? Who else so manifestly combines delight and profit as does he? Over and over again, from the earliest traditions to the latest characterization, the poet has, in the highest sense, been called a teacher, and instruction of the noblest kind has been named among his animating purposes. How inevitably, then, does Milton claim for him the privileges of the contemplative life, and how justly ascribe to him a fine responsiveness to them!

Though such were Milton's claims and ascriptions, he had a way of throwing the poet into relief by contrasting him with the teacher in the usual sense. His prose abounds in references to common methods of instruction in schools, from pulpits, and through the press. If collected, I believe they would show, as could nothing else Milton's habitual temper in his family, in the little school on Aldersgate Street of which he was for a time master, with those 'persons of man's estate, who . . . greedily catched at the

describe the normal man, in whom, as typified by Adam, mental and physical powers are balanced, and in whose nature there is no such bias as is necessary to genius:

> For contemplation he and valor formed.

Having assumed both these virtues for his own sex, Milton offsets them in Eve by the comparatively colorless substitutes of 'softness' and 'sweet attractive grace.'

opportunity' to read to him,[1] and among those who regarded him as a casual friend and associate. But this is aside from the topic, and we shall delay over only one or two of his remarks which contrast the poet and the ordinary teacher. Though the poet may impart accurate knowledge, and never, so long as he is worthy of his calling, will impart anything but ultimate truth, he deals with knowledge and objective truth only in their vital connection with beauty, and only in a beautiful manner. Herein lies his essential difference from all other teachers whatsoever. From Aristotle and Seneca, Milton had learned the value of another method of dealing with knowledge, a disciplinary method that he called 'the art of powerful reclaiming.' 'Gravest authors,' he says in *Colasterion*, 'both Aristotle in the second of his *Ethics* to Nicomachus, and Seneca in his seventh *De Beneficiis*, advise us to stretch out the line of precept ofttimes beyond measure, that while we tend further, the mean might be the easier attained.'[2] And in *Tetrachordon*, again with an allusion to the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he remarks: 'As the offence was in one extreme, the rebuke to bring more efficaciously to a rectitude and mediocrity stands not in the middle way of duty, but in the other extreme; . . . as when we bend a crooked wand the contrary way; not that it should stand so bent, but that the overbending might reduce it to a straightness by its own reluctance.'[3] Compare this, Milton's approved method of ordinary exhortation, with the procedure of the poet. It is the poet, as we already have seen,[1] who teaches over 'the whole book of sanctity and virtue through all the instances of example, with such delight to those especially of soft and delicious temper—who will not so much as look upon Truth herself unless they see her elegantly dressed;—that, whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they would then appear to all men both easy and pleasant, though they were rugged and difficult indeed.' Note the contrast: the poet exerts the full force of his art without violating symmetry and reasonableness; the teacher often must disturb symmetry, and sacrifice reasonableness, for the sake of efficiency. He must answer the fool according to his folly, and must instruct in hyperboles, or with scorn and laughter that the simple may thereby be made wise. And I would ask,' says Milton, 'to what end Elijah mocked the false prophets? Was it to show his wit, or to fulfil his humor? Doubtless we cannot imagine that great servant of God had any other end in all which he there did, but to teach and instruct the poor misled people.'[2] But in the teaching of the poet—I speak here, as elsewhere, of the ideal poet—there is no mockery; nor, in reality, is there, as we shall later see, any thought of compromise. He enters into contact with his fellow men with all the serenity of his contemplative background upon him, and instructs without perturbation, and teaches without strain.

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[1] Phillips, *Life of Milton.* in *Of Education* [etc.], ed. by Lockwood, p. lxxix.

[2] *Colasterion, Works* 4.366.

[3] *Tetrachordon* (Matt. 19.9), *Works* 4.233–234. And cf. *Divorce* (Bk. 2, chap. 1), *Works* 4.59: 'A countersway of restraint curbing their wild exorbitance almost into the other extreme; as when we bow things the contrary way to make them come to their natural straightness.'

And by this we are brought to consider the audience of the poet. The ordinary teacher may demand no other

[1] See above, pp. 69–70.

[2] *An Apology, Works* 3.283.

qualifications in those he instructs than a certain meekness,[1] a certain sincerity,[2] and a certain docility and diligence.[3] Otherwise he is bound to suit his method to the varying characteristics of his pupils; for 'in teaching of men diversely tempered different ways are to be tried.'[4] To Milton, the poet, on the contrary, is concerned with the judicious,[5] the fit though few,[6] or those, whom, in another connection, he has called the 'wise and right understanding handful of men';[7] he flees the 'unlettered throng,'[8] and may avoid 'the astonishment of the literary vulgar.'[9] This was the same discriminating view of the poet's audience as that most often held by the critics of the Renaissance. Castelvetro and Tasso, to be sure, had taken a different position, Tasso with some reservations, Castelvetro unconditionally, but Milton in this particular, as in several others, disagrees with them. Castelvetro asserted that poetry should please all tastes, for its sole purpose is to delight and to re-create; and had any one in the half-impatient spirit of Minturno[10] or Wordsworth,[11] asked, Delight and recreate whom? Castelvetro would have replied with conviction: I say to delight and recreate the minds of the rude multitude (*rozza moltitudine*) and of the common people who do not understand the reasoning, or the distinctions, or the subtle and unfamiliar arguments adopted by philosophers in their investigation of truth, and by artists in their handling (*ordinare*) of art.[1] Milton's opposition to any such attitude comes to light early, and thereafter frequently; it is summarized in the ode to John Rouse, where the poet desires for his work a peaceful home,

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[1] See *An Apology*, *Works* 3.256.
[2] See *Tetrachordon* (Matt. 19.7,8), *Works* 4.228–229.
[3] See *2 Defence*, trans. by Fellowes, 6.440–441 (*Works* 6.325–326).
[4] *An Apology*, *Works* 3.278.
[5] Preface to *S. A.*
[6] *P. L.* 7.31.
[7] *Divorce* (Bk. 1, Preface), *Works* 4.12.
[8] *Ad Patrem* 103, trans. by Cowper, p. 607.
[9] *2 Defence*, trans. by Fellowes, 6.394 (*Works* 6.280).
[10] Cf. *L'Arte Poetica*, Bk. 1, p.26.
[11] Cf. Letter to Wilson (1800), *Prose Works*, ed. by Knight, 1.37.

> Whence the coarse unlettered multitude
> Shall babble far remote.[2]

In short, Milton's poet addresses an audience of ideal readers, or, in his nephew's phrase, 'persons of transcendent judgment,'[3] and, upon the assumption that things 'obvious to every fancy are the more likely to be erroneous,'[4] creates his masterpiece regardless of popular standards or the terms of popular approval. Nor is this at variance with a liberal conception of his art. The poet is not the less a member of the social organism, and does not the less contribute to its vigor and its beauty, because he in no way caters to its defective taste. Rightly and necessarily his immediate hold is upon the few; his duty is to hearten men of vision while they direct the practical activities of their nation toward forms of virtue and spiritual loveliness, the true marks of civil well-being. It is their imagination that he addresses, and through them that his teaching is transmitted.

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[1] Cf. *Poetica d'Aristotele*, p. 29.

[2] *Ad Rousium* 79–80, trans. by Cowper, p. 621. Cf. Horace, *Carm.* 3.1.1:

> Odi profanum vulgus et arceo.

Trans. by Conington:

> I bid the unhallowed crowd avaunt!

[3] Phillips, Preface to *Theatrum Poetarum*, in *Crit. Essays of the Seventeenth Century* 2.261–262: 'I am apt to believe that as it is a more frequent thing to over- than undervalue, so a universal contempt is a shrewd, not infallible, sign of a universal indesert. The reason is plain; for though no doubt the number of judicious and knowing is as great, if not greater, than ever, yet most confessedly not so great as that of the ignorant or only superficically knowing. There are many that think, few only that judge. Therefore things of the most transcendent excellence are for the most part only valued by persons of transcendent judgment; whereas the indifferent and plausible are received with general and vulgar applause.'

[4] *Eikonoclastes* (8), *Works* 3.395.

As to more prosaic duties—the expression is used half-literally—from such Milton's poet is not entirely released. As has been said, he is to suppose the obligations of his life met, and its ideal programme fulfilled rather than transgressed, by occasional active participation in affairs. A temporary abandonment of study and seclusion, when 'God commands to take the trumpet and blow a dolorous or a jarring blast,'[1] justifies his customary leisure, and is a price rightly paid for his otherwise unbroken quiet. Consequently, Milton addresses to himself the following potential accusation:

> This I foresee, that, should the Church be brought under heavy oppression, and God have given me ability the while to reason against that man that should be the author of so foul a deed, or should she, by blessing from above on the industry and courage of faithful men, change this her distracted estate into better days without the least furtherance or contribution of those few talents which God at that present had lent me, I foresee what stories I should hear within myself all my life after of discourage and reproach: 'Timorous and ingrateful, the Church of God is now again at the foot of her insulting enemies, and thou bewailest; what matters it for thee or they bewailing? When time was, thou couldst not find a syllable of all that thou hadst read or studied to utter

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[1] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.140.

in her behalf. Yet ease and leisure was given thee for thy retired thoughts out of the sweat of other men. Thou hadst the diligence, the parts, the language of a man, if a vain subject were to be adorned or beautified, but when the cause of God and his Church was to be pleaded, for which purpose that tongue was given thee which thou hast, God listened if he could hear thy voice among his zealous servants, but thou wert dumb as a beast. From hence forward be that which thine own brutish silence hath made thee.'[1]

And yet in ordinary social intercourse, if we take Milton's words seriously, his studious poet may be a failure:

> I admit, indeed, that one who is almost wholly secluded and immersed in studies is readier to address the gods than men—whether because he is generally at home with the gods, but a stranger and pilgrim in human affairs, or because the mind, enlarged by the constant contemplation of divine things and so wriggling with difficulty in the straits of the body, is less expert than it might otherwise be in the nicer gestures of social salutation.[2]

But distrust such as this contradicts Milton's belief in the law of form, and must not be taken too sweepingly. In the long run an awkward bearing could not suggest to him the symmetry of a studious mind. Whatever inspired the words, it was not his general conviction. Perhaps it was chagrin. Milton was an undergraduate when he wrote the passage, and may still have been making his way with his fellows in the university; some transient self-consciousness may have disturbed the balance between behavior and the springs of behavior, and the painful experience may have been fresh in his memory.

While Milton's poet undoubtedly did his civil and social duty among his fellows with a fair measure of compliance, he probably rendered his characteristic service with such aloofness, that he was largely inattentive to criticism. Milton himself at all events does not seem to have sought critical opinions on his own work. He did indeed send some of his early verses to friends like Alexander Gill[1] and Charles Diodati[2] for comment, and he wished to have the judgment of Thomas Ellwood, a young Quaker formerly in his employ as a reader, upon what may have been a complete draft of *Paradise Lost.*[3] But in these instances Milton scarcely was asking qualified critics to pass on his work. And Phillips, who 'from the very beginning' had the perusal of *Paradise Lost* in sections 'of ten, twenty, or thirty verses at a time,' quite understood that he served his uncle merely as a corrector of 'the orthography and pointing' of the manuscript.[4] I think we may be sure that Milton would have expected in his ideal poet the same 'niceness of nature,' and the same 'honest haughtiness and self-esteem . . . (which let envy call pride),'[5] that characterized his own attitude toward the critical standards of his day.

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[1] *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 2.141.

[2] *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.462, trans. by Masson, *Life of Milton,* 1.300.

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[1] Cf. *Epist. Fam.* 3, *Works* 7.372.

[2] Cf. *Elegia* 6, last line.

[3] Cf. *The History of Thomas Ellwood, Written by Himself,* in Morley's Universal Library, pp. 199–200. The editor, without ridiculing Ellwood's pride in the incident, suggests Milton's true purpose in handing over the manuscript: 'When Milton gave his young friend—then twenty-six years old—the manuscript of *Paradise Lost* to read, his desire could only have been to learn what comprehension of his purpose there would be in a young man sincerely religious, as intelligent as most, with a taste for verse, though not much of a poet.' In other words, Ellwood served his 'quondam master' as 'an ideal spectator' or reader rather than a qualified critic.

[4] Phillips, *Life of Milton,* in *Of Education* [etc.], ed. by Lockwood, pp. lxxv–lxxvi.

[5] *An Apology, Works* 3.271.

In his personal attitude to fame Milton likewise undoubtedly reflected his notion of the proper attitude of the poet to the 'literary vulgar.' Sudden reputation could have satisfied him no more than the popularity by which it was conferred:

> For what is glory but the blaze of fame,
> The people's praise, if always praise unmixed?
> And what the people but a herd confused,
> A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
> Things vulgar, and, well weighed, scarce worth the praise?
> They praise and they admire they know not what,
> And know not whom, but as one leads the other;
> And what delight to be by such extolled,
> To live upon their tongues and be their talk?
> Of whom to be dispraised were no small praise—
> His lot who dares be singularly good.
> The intelligent among them and the wise
> Are few, and glory scarce of few is raised.
> This is true glory and renown—when God,
> Looking on the Earth, with approbation marks
> The just man, and divulges him through Heaven
> To all his Angels, who with true applause
> Recount his praises.[1]

In *Lycidas*, of course, Milton admits the stimulus of worldly recognition, but I think his acknowledgment again illustrates his tolerance of ephemeral values. Though the desire of fame eventually becomes one of the 'childish things,' there is a time in the career of the poet when the desire is, in itself, a discipline. In the following lines from *Lycidas* the first three are significant, but Milton's real conclusion is expressed in the rejoinder of Apollo:

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[1] *P. R.* 3.47–64.

> Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
> (That last infirmity of noble mind)
> To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
> But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
> And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
> Comes the blind Fury with the abhorrèd shears,
> And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise,'
> Phoebus replied, and touched my trembling ears:
> 'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
> Nor in the glistering foil
> Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies,
> But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
> And perfect witness of all-judging Jove;
> As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
> Of so much fame in Heaven expect thy meed.'[1]

But the great poet wins even temporal and worldly recognition less swiftly than other men. In the year 1665 'all Europe' talked 'from side to side,'[2] not of Milton the author of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, of *Lycidas* and *Comus*, but of Milton the champion of liberty and of the Commonwealth. It requires the 'fit audience' of generations to confer the earthly counterpart of that enduring renown, that immortal fame, with its 'garlands, starry and unwithering,' toward which the young poet must lift his desire and urge his winged horse to bear him up.[3]

The various aspects of Milton's ideal poet are brought together in a single concept whose roots lie deep in the past. If he did not, with his infallible directness in such matters, start from this concept, he came upon it in following old pathways. When he reached it, he stood with his predecessors on a moral eminence. We remember that Aristophanes, through one of his characters, admitted no distinction between Euripides the bad citizen and Euripides the bad poet, but ridiculed him on both counts as for one fault; and that Aristotle, though his test of art seems primarily aesthetic, so described the end of poetry that its accomplishment implies lofty ideals of conduct in the poet. Yet it remained, I believe, for Strabo in his *Geography* to state the absolute interdependence between the power and beauty of poetry and the virtue and nobility of the poet's character. Strabo asks:

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[1] *Lycidas* 70–84.

[2] *To Mr. Cyriack Skinner upon his Blindness* 12.

[3] Cf. *Epist. Fam.* 7, *Works* 7.378; and 'Letter to a Friend,' in Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.324.

> Who . . . can assume, that the poet who is capable of introducing other men in the rôle of orators, or of generals, or in other rôles that exhibit the accomplishments of the art of rhetoric, is himself but one of the buffoons or jugglers, capable only of bewitching and flattering his hearer, but not of helping him? Nor can we assume that any excellence of a poet whatever is superior to that which enables him to imitate life through the means of speech. How, then, can a man imitate life if he has no experience of life, and is a dolt? Of course we do not speak of the excellence of a poet in the same sense as we speak of that of a carpenter or a blacksmith; for their excellence depends upon no inherent nobility and dignity, whereas the excellence of a poet is inseparably associated with the excellence of the man himself, and it is impossible for one to become a good poet unless he has previously become a good man.[1]

The same thought underlies Longinus' conception of sublimity as 'the echo of a great soul.' 'It is not possible,' says he, 'that men with mean and servile ideas and aims prevailing throughout their lives, should produce anything that is admirable and worthy of immortality. Great accents we expect to fall from the lips of those whose thoughts are deep and grave. Thus it is that stately speech comes naturally to the proudest spirits.'[1] This idea was revived in the Renaissance, and, in addition, certain analogous classical praises of the philosopher and of the orator were transferred to the poet.[2] Ben Jonson, in his dedication of *Volpone* to 'the two famous universities,' states the matter simply: 'For if men will impartially, and not asquint, look toward the offices and function of a poet, they will easily conclude to themselves the impossibility of any man's being the good poet without first being a good man.'[3] And finally, Milton, inspired by his faith in the law of form, adds his memorable utterance on the interrelation of aesthetic and moral beauty.

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[1] Strabo, *Geography* 1.2.5, trans. by H. L. Jones, 1.63.

> He who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem, that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy.[4]

In this realization of the unity of his art with all that is most aspiring and most noble in human life, Milton's theory of poetry is complete.

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[1] Longinus, *On the Sublime*, chap. 9, ed. by Rhys Roberts, p. 61.

[2] Cf. Spingarn, *Lit. Crit. in the Ren.*, pp. 53–54.

[3] In *Crit. Essays of the Seventeenth Century* 1.12. See Coleridge, *Table Talk*, Aug. 20, 1833, *Works*, ed. by Shedd, 5.481, where these words of Jonson are referred to Strabo.

[4] *An Apology, Works* 3.270–271. Cf. *Epist. Fam.* 21, *Works* 7.399, trans. by Hall, p. 86: 'If I have written anything well, I should wish my mind and character to be correspondent.'

# ILLUSTRATIVE PASSAGES

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# PASSAGES FROM THE WRITINGS OF MILTON THAT BEAR UPON HIS THEORY OF POETRY AND FINE ART

## I. PASSAGES SUGGESTING MILTON'S CONCEPT OF 'FORM'

(For incidental references to 'form,' and to closely related matters, such as purpose, function, correspondence, and so on, see above, pp. 1–26).

1. *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 2, chap. 1) 2.240:[1]

It is faith that justifies, not agreement with the Decalogue; and that which justifies can alone render any work good; none therefore of our works can be good, but by faith; hence faith is the essential form of good works; the definition of form being that by which a thing is what it is.

2. *Tetrachordon* (Gen. 2.24), *Works* 4.169:

Definition is decreed by logicians to consist only of causes constituting the essence of a thing. What is not therefore among the causes constituting marriage must not stay in the definition. Those causes are concluded to be matter and, as the artist calls it, form. But inasmuch as the same thing may be a cause more ways than one, and that in relations and institutions which have no corporal subsistence, but only a respective being, the form by which the thing is what it is, is oft so slender and undistinguishable, that it would soon confuse, were it not sustained by the efficient and final causes, which concur to make up the form invalid otherwise of itself, it will be needful to take in all the four causes into the definition.

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[1] The references to *Christian Doctrine*, throughout these Illustrative Passages, are to Sumner's translation.

3. *Artis Logicae* (Praef.), *Works* 7.4:

Forma sive ipsa ratio artis non tam est praeceptorum illorum methodica dispositio, quam utilis alicujus rei praeceptio: per id enim quod docet potius quam per ordinem docendi, ars est id quod est

Translation:

The form or very fashion of an art is not so much the methodical arrangement of its rules as its teaching of something useful: because of what it teaches rather than because of the manner of its teaching, an art is what it is.

4. *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 1, chap. 5) 1.128:

It is impossible for any *ens* to retain its own essence in common with any other thing whatever, since by this essence it is what it is.

5. *Colasterion, Works* 4.368:

How can a thing subsist when the true essence thereof is dissolved?

6. *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 1, chap. 10) 1.322–323:

[Marriage is indissoluble] if good will, love, help, comfort, fidelity, remain unshaken on both sides, which according to universal acknowledgment, is the essential form of marriage. But if the essential form be dissolved, it follows that the marriage itself is virtually dissolved.

7. *Animadversions, Works* 3.206:

'Tis not the goodness of matter therefore which is not, nor can be, owed to the Liturgy, that will bear it out, if the form which is the essence of it be fantastic and superstitious, the end sinister, and the imposition violent.

8. *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 1, chap. 7) 1.260:

God breathed the breath of life into the other living beings, and blended it so intimately with matter, that the propagation and production of the human form were analogous to those of other forms, and the proper effect of that power which had been communicated to matter by the Deity. Man being formed after the image of God, it followed as a necessary consequence that he should be endued with natural wisdom, holiness, and righteousness.

9. *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 1, chap. 14) 1.391:

For human nature, that is the form of man in a material mold, wherever it exists, constitutes at once the proper and entire man, deficient in no part of his essence.

10. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 1, chap. 2), *Works* 3.103:

Did God take such delight in measuring out the pillars, arches, and doors of a material temple...? Should not He rather now...cast His line and level upon the soul of man, which is His rational temple, and by the divine square and compass thereof form and regenerate in us the lovely shapes of virtues and graces?

11. *Reformation* (Bk. 1), *Works* 3.30:

The very essence of truth is plainness and brightness; the darkness and crookedness is our own.

12. *Comus* 459–463:

Till oft converse with heavenly habitants
Begin to cast a beam on the outward shape,
The unpolluted temple of the mind,
And turns it by degrees to the soul's essence,
Till all be made immortal.

13. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2, chap. 2), *Works* 3.154:

Believe it, wondrous Doctors, all corporeal resemblances of inward holiness and beauty are now past.

14. *P. L.* 3.138–141:

Beyond compare the Son of God was seen
Most glorious; in him all his Father shone
Substantially expressed; and in his face
Divine compassion visibly appeared.

15. *An Apology*, *Works* 3.316:

Certainly, Readers, the worship of God singly in itself, the very act of prayer and thanksgiving, with those free and unimposed expressions which from a sincere heart unbidden come into the outward gesture, is the greatest decency that can be imagined. Which to dress up and garnish with a devised bravery, abolished in the Law, and disclaimed by the Gospel, adds nothing but a deformed ugliness.

16. *Episcopacy, Works* 3.81:

We do injuriously in thinking to taste better the pure evangelic manna by seasoning our mouths with the tainted scraps and fragments of an unknown table; and searching among the verminous and polluted rags dropped overworn from the toiling shoulders of time, with these deformedly to quilt and interlace the entire, the spotless and undecaying, robe of truth.

17. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 1, chap. 3), *Works* 3.111:

For doubtless there is a certain attraction and magnetic force betwixt the religion and the ministerial form thereof. If the religion be pure, spiritual, simple, and lowly, as the Gospel most truly is, such must the face of the ministry be. And in like manner, if the form of the ministry be grounded in the worldly degrees of authority, honor, temporal jurisdiction, we see it with our eyes it will turn the inward power and purity of the Gospel into the outward carnality of the Law, evaporating and exhaling the internal worship into empty conformities and gay shows.

18. *P. L.* 2.438–441:

The void profound
Of unessential Night receives him next,
Wide-gaping, and with utter loss of being
Threatens him, plunged in that abortive gulf.

19. *P. L.* 7.232–233:

Thus God the Heaven created, thus the Earth,
Matter unformed and void.

20. *P. L.* 10.469–472:

Long were to tell
What I have done, what suffered, with what pain
Voyaged the unreal, vast, unbounded Deep
Of horrible confusion.

## II. EXAMPLES OF MILTON'S USE OF THE WORD 'ART' AND ITS DERIVATIVES

### A. Legitimate Ingenuity, Skill, Knowledge of a Method whereby to Perform a Given Task or to Accomplish a Desired End.

1. *P. L.* 10.312–314, 317–318:

> Now had they brought the work by wondrous art
> Pontifical—a ridge of pendent rock
> Over the vexed abyss . . .
> —to the outside bare
> Of this round World.

2. *P. L.* 1.692–704:

> And here let those
> Who boast in mortal things, and wondering tell
> Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,
> Learn how their greatest monuments of fame,
> And strength, and art, are easily outdone
> By spirits reprobate, and in an hour
> What in an age they, with incessant toil
> And hands innumerable, scarce perform.
> Nigh on the plain, in many cells prepared,
> That underneath had veins of liquid fire
> Sluiced from the lake, a second multitude
> With wondrous art founded the massy ore,
> Severing each kind, and scummed the bullion-dross.

3. *P. L.* 2.269–273:

> As He our darkness, cannot we His light
> Imitate when we please? This desert soil
> Wants not her hidden lustre, gems and gold;
> Nor want we skill or art from whence to raise
> Magnificence; and what can Heaven show more?

4. *Animadversions, Works* 3.215:

Go, therefore, and use all your art, apply your sledges, your levers, and your iron crows, to heave and hale your mighty Polyphem of antiquity to the delusion of novices and unexperienced Christians.

5. *An Apology, Works* 3.309:

This is undoubted, that if any carpenter, smith, or weaver were such a bungler in his trade as the greater number of them [clerks of the university] are in their profession, he would starve for any custom. And should he exercise his manufacture as little as they do their talents, he would forget his art; and should he mistake his tools, as they do theirs, he would mar all the work he took in hand.

6. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 1), *Works* 5.2–3:

I have . . . determined to bestow the telling over even of these reputed tales, be it for nothing else but in favor of our English poets and rhetoricians, who by their art will know how to use them judiciously.

7. *Epist. Fam.* 26, *Works* 7.405:

Diversae enim sunt partes rhetoris et historici, sive narrant, sive probant; quemadmodum et artes ipsae inter se diversae sunt.

Translation by Fellowes (1.xxxvii):

For the offices of a rhetorician and an historian are as different as the arts which they profess.

8. *Animadersions, Works* 3.224:

The law of method, which bears chief sway in the art of teaching, requires that clearest and plainest expressions be set foremost, to the end they may enlighten any following obscurity.

9. *Reformation* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.33:

There is no art that hath been more cankered in her principles . . . than the art of policy; and that most where a man would think should least be, in Christian commonwealths.

10. *Areopagitica, Works* 4.418:

Impunity and remissness for certain are the bane of a commonwealth, but here the great art lies to discern in what the law is to bid restraint and punishment, and in what things persuasion only is to work.

11. *Eikonoclastes* (Preface), *Works* 3.334:

This man [Charles I]...hath offered at more cunning fetches to undermine our liberties, and put tyranny into an art, than any British king before him.

12. *Comus* 304–310:

*Lady.* Gentle villager,
What readiest way would bring me to that place?
*Comus.* Due west it rises from this shrubby point.
*Lady.* To find out that, good shepherd, I suppose,
In such a scant allowance of star-light,
Would overtask the best land-pilot's art,
Without the sure guess of well-practised feet.

13. *Lycidas* 119–121:

Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learnt aught else the least
That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!

14. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 5), *Works* 5.211:

He [King Alfred] was...excellent at hunting, and the new art then of hawking.

15. *Tetrachordon* (Gen. 2.18), 4.153:

Loneliness is the first thing which God's eye named not good—whether it be a thing, or the want of something, I labor not; let it be their tendance who have the art to be industriously idle.

And see 1.3; III. A. 4; XI. A. 1 (note); XXI. 2.

B. WORKMANSHIP, CRAFTSMANSHIP, TECHNIQUE.

1. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.143:

Time enough to pencil it over with all the curious touches of art even to the perfection of a faultless picture.

And see II. E. 4; F. 3; III. C. iii. a. 1; D. 8; X. 1, 2; XI. D. ii. 4.

### C. Guile, Artifice, Cunning, Trickery.

1. *P. L.* 2.410–415:

What strength, what art, can then
Suffice, or what evasion bear him safe
Through the strict senteries and stations thick
Of angels watching round? Here he had need
All circumspection.

2. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 1), *Works* 5.20:

In which fight Dunwallo is reported, while the victory hung doubtful, to have used this art. He takes with him 600 stout men, bids them put on the armor of their slain enemies, and so, unexpectedly approaching the squadron where those two kings had placed themselves in fight, from that part which they thought securest assaults and dispatches them.

3. *Eikonoclastes* (21), *Works* 3.482:

They [certain letters] revealed his [King Charles'] endeavors to bring in foreign forces . . . upon us, besides his subtleties and mysterious arts in treating.

4. *S. A.* 748–752:

These are thy wonted arts,
And arts of every woman false like thee,
To break all faith, all vows, deceive, betray;
Then, as repentant, to submit, beseech,
And reconcilement move with feigned remorse.

5. *Animadversions, Works* 3.235:

The other [the 'learned hypocrite'] is still using all his sophisticated arts, and bending all his studies how to make his insatiate avarice and ambition seem pious.

6. *P. L.* 5.764–768:

Thither he assembled all his train,
Pretending so commanded to consult
About the great reception of their King
Thither to come, and with calumnious art
Of counterfeited truth thus held their ears.

7. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk.2), *Works* 5.66:

Then were the Roman fashions imitated, and the gown; after a while the incitements also and materials of vice and voluptuous life, proud buildings, baths, and the elegance of banqueting, which the foolisher sort called civility, but was indeed a secret art to prepare them for bondage.

## D. Magic.

1. *Comus* 145–151:

Break off, break off! I feel the different pace
Of some chaste footing near about this ground.
Run to your shrouds within these brakes and trees;
Our number may affright. Some virgin sure
(For so I can distinguish by mine art)
Benighted in these woods! Now to my charms,
And to my wily trains.

2. *S. A.* 1139–1140:

I know no spells, use no forbidden arts;
My trust is in the living God.

## E. Art and Nature in various Relations.

1. *Artis Logicae,* (Praef.), *Works* 7.3:

Ad id enim ars adhibetur, ut naturam juvet, non ut impediat.

Translation:

For the use of art is to help, not hinder, nature.

2. *An Apology, Works* 3.256:

For doubtless that indeed according to art is most eloquent which returns and approaches nearest to nature from whence it came.

3. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 5.38–39:

A place notably made strong both by art and nature, which it seems had been a fort or hold of strength raised heretofore in time of wars.

4. *P. L.* 4.236–243:

But rather to tell how, if Art could tell
How, from that sapphire fount the crispèd brooks,
Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold,
With mazy error under pendent shades
Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
Flowers worthy of Paradise, which not nice Art
In beds and curious knots, but Nature boon
Poured forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain.

5. *P. L.* 5.291–297:

Their glittering tents he passed, and now is come
Into the blissful field, through groves of myrrh,
And flowering odors, cassia, nard, and balm,
A wilderness of sweets; for Nature here
Wantoned as in her prime, and played at will
Her virgin fancies, pouring forth more sweet,
Wild above rule or art, enormous bliss.

6. *P. R.* 2.291–297:

Thither he bent his way, determined there
To rest at noon, and entered soon the shade
High-roofed, and walks beneath, and alleys brown,
That opened in the midst a woody scene;
Nature's own work it seemed (Nature taught Art),
And, to a superstitious eye, the haunt
Of wood-gods and wood-nymphs.

And see IV. F. 2; VIII. A. 1; XI. D. i. 1.

### F. LEARNING, AND THE FINE AND LIBERAL ARTS.

1. *P. L.* 11.605–606:

Studious they appear
Of arts that polish life.

2. *P. R.* 4.240–241:

Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts
And eloquence.

3. *P. R.* 4.334–338:

All our Law and Story strewed
With hymns, our Psalms with artful terms inscribed,
Our Hebrew songs and harps, in Babylon
That pleased so well our victor's ear, declare
That rather Greece from us these arts derived.

4. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 4), *Works* 5.162:

The Greek and Latin tongue, with other liberal arts, arithmetic, music, astronomy, and the like, began first to flourish among the Saxons.

5. *P. R.* 4.368–372:

Since neither wealth nor honor, arms nor arts,
Kingdom nor empire, pleases thee, nor aught
By me proposed in life contemplative
Or active, tended on by glory or fame,
What dost thou in this world?

6. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 5.66:

He [Agricola] caused . . . the noblemen's sons to be bred up in liberal arts.

7. *Animadversions, Works* 3.239:

How in England all noble sciences attending upon the train of Christian doctrine may flourish more than ever; and how the able professors of every art may with ample stipends be honestly provided, . . . and all this without the prelates, the courses are so many and so easy, that I shall pass them over.

8. *Education, Works* 4.382:

For the usual method of teaching arts, I deem it to be an old error of universities not yet well recovered from the scholastic grossness of barbarous ages, that instead of beginning with arts most easy, and those be such as are most obvious to the sense, they present their young unmatriculated novices at first coming with the most intellective abstractions of logic and metaphysics.

And see IV. I. 2; X. 2; XIII. 1; XVIII. 1, 5, 6, 8, 9; XXIII. 2.

### G. The Artist.

1. *P. L.* 1.284–289:

His ponderous shield,
Ethereal temper, massy, large, and round,
Behind him cast. The broad circumference
Hung on his shoulders like the moon, whose orb
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views
At evening, from the top of Fesolè.

2. *S. A.* 1323–1325:

Have they not sword-players, and every sort
Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Jugglers and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics ?

3. *Animadversions, Works* 3.200:

Call hither your cook...May... [a man] not make his meals in order, though he be not bound to this or that viand? Doubtless the neat-fingered artist will answer 'yes', and help us out of this great controversy without more trouble.

And see I. 2; XIII. 1; XIV. 1, 2, 3.

## III. THE FINE ARTS OTHER THAN POETRY

### A. Architecture.

1. *Il Pens.* 155–160:

But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowèd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.

2. *P. L.* 1.710–734:

Anon out of the earth a fabric huge
Rose like an exhalation, with the sound
Of dulcet symphonies and voices sweet—
Built like a temple, where pilasters round
Were set, and Doric pillars overlaid

With golden architrave; nor did there want
Cornice or frieze, with bossy sculptures graven:
The roof was fretted gold. Not Babylon
Nor great Alcairo such magnificence
Equaled in all their glories, to enshrine
Belus or Serapis their gods, or seat
Their kings, when Egypt with Assyria strove
In wealth and luxury. The ascending pile
Stood fixed her stately height; and straight the doors,
Opening their brazen folds, discover, wide
Within, her ample spaces o'er the smooth
And level pavement. From the archèd roof,
Pendent by subtle magic, many a row
Of starry lamps and blazing cressets, fed
With naphtha and asphaltus, yielded light
As from a sky. The hasty multitude
Admiring entered; and the work some praise,
And some the architect. His hand was known
In Heaven by many a towered structure high,
Where sceptred angels held their residence.

3. *P. R.* 4.43–60:

The city which thou seest no other deem
Than great and glorious Rome, queen of the earth
So far renowned, and with the spoils enriched
Of nations. There the Capitol thou seest,
Above the rest lifting his stately head
On the Tarpeian rock, her citadel
Impregnable; and there Mount Palatine,
The imperial palace, compass huge, and high
The structure, skill of noblest architects,
With gilded battlements, conspicuous far,
Turrets, and terraces, and glittering spires.
Many a fair edifice besides, more like
Houses of gods—so well I have disposed
My aery microscope—thou may'st behold,
Outside and inside both, pillars and roofs
Carved work, the hand of famed artificers
In cedar, marble, ivory, or gold.

4. *Animadversions, Works* 3.234:

If in less noble and almost mechanic arts...he is not esteemed to deserve the name of a complete architect, an excellect painter, or the like, that bears not a generous mind above the peasantly regard of wages and hire, much more must we think him a most imperfect and incomplete divine who is . . . far from being a condemner of filthy lucre.

5. *Education, Works* 4.387:

What hinders but that they may procure...the helpful experiences of hunters, fowlers, fishermen, shepherds, gardeners, apothecaries, and in the other sciences, architects, engineers, mariners, anatomists?

And see III. D. 1, 3.

## B. LANDSCAPE-GARDENING.

1. *Animadversions, Wokrs* 3.232:

It is well known to be a matter of less skill and less labor to keep a garden handsome than it is to plant it or contrive it.

2. *Il Pens*. 49–50:

And add to these retirèd Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure.

3. *Il. Pens*. 65–66:

And, missing thee, I walk unseen
On the dry smooth-shaven green.

4. *Comus* 984–985:

Along the crispèd shades and bowers
Revels the spruce and jocund Spring.

5. *P. L.* 4.131–153:

So on he fares, and to the border comes
Of Eden, where delicious Paradise,
Now nearer, crowns with her enclosure green,
As with a rural mound, the champaign head
Of a steep wilderness, whose hairy sides
With thicket overgrown, grotesque and wild,
Access denied; and overhead up-grew

Insuperable height of loftiest shade,
Cedar, and pine, and fir, and branching palm,
A sylvan scene, and, as the ranks ascend
Shade above shade, a woody theatre
Of stateliest view. Yet higher than their tops
The verdurous wall of Paradise up-sprung;
Which to our general sire gave prospect large
Into his nether empire neighboring round.
And higher than that wall a circling row
Of goodliest trees, loaden with fairest fruit,
Blossoms and fruits at once of golden hue,
Appeared, with gay enameled colors mixed;
On which the sun more glad impressed his beams
Than in fair evening cloud, or humid bow,
When God hath showered the earth; so lovely seemed
That landscape.

6. *P. L.* 4.223–263:

Southward through Eden went a river large,
Nor changed his course, but through the shaggy hill
Passed underneath ingulfed; for God had thrown
That mountain, as his garden-mold, high raised
Upon the rapid current, which through veins
Of porous earth with kindly thirst updrawn,
Rose a fresh fountain, and with many a rill
Watered the Garden; thence united fell
Down the steep glade, and met the nether flood,
Which from his darksome passage now appears,
And now, divided into four main streams,
Runs diverse, wandering many a famous realm
And country whereof here needs no account;
But rather to tell how, if Art could tell
How, from that sapphire fount the crispèd brooks,[1]
Rolling on orient pearl and sands of gold,

---

[1] Walpole thinks it significant of a change in Milton's idea of a perfect garden that in *Paradise Lost* it is the brooks that are 'crisped,' whereas in *Comus* (984) the very trees throw 'crisped' shadows. See *On Modern Gardening*, in *Anecdotes of Painting*, pp. 248–249, note.

With mazy error under pendent shades
Ran nectar, visiting each plant, and fed
Flowers worthy of Paradise, which not nice Art
In beds and curious knots, but Nature boon
Poured forth profuse on hill, and dale, and plain,
Both where the morning sun first warmly smote
The open field, and where the unpierced shade
Embrowned the noontide bowers. Thus was this place
A happy rural seat of various view:
Groves whose rich trees wept odorous gums and balm;
Others whose fruit, burnished with golden rind,
Hung amiable—Hesperian fables true,
If true, here only—and of delicious taste.
Betwixt them lawns, or level downs, and flocks
Grazing the tender herb, were interposed,
Or palmly hillock; or the flowery lap
Of some irriguous valley spread her store,
Flowers of all hue, and without thorn the rose.
Another side umbrageous grots and caves
Of cool recess, o'er which the mantling vine
Lays forth her purple grape, and gently creeps
Luxuriant; meanwhile murmuring waters fall
Down the slope hills dispersed, or in a lake,
That to the fringèd bank with myrtle crowned
Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.

7. *P. L.* 4.543–550:

It was a rock
Of alabaster, piled up to the clouds,
Conspicuous far, winding with one ascent
Accessible from Earth, one entrance high;
The rest was craggy cliff, that overhung
Still as it rose, impossible to climb.
Betwixt these rocky pillars Gabriel sat,
Chief of the angelic guards, awaiting night.

And see II. E. 5, 6.

## C. Music.

(Unless they throw some light on Milton's knowledge of the art, references to instruments, and to the music accompanying events in Heaven, are omitted).

### i. GENERAL REFERENCES TO MUSIC

1. *2 Defence, Works* 6.287:

Ita tamen ut nonnunquam, rus urbe mutarem, aut coemendorum gratia librorum, aut novum quidpiam in mathematicis, vel in musicis, quibus tum oblectabar, addiscendi.

Translation by Fellowes (6.401):

I occasionally visited the Metropolis either for the sake of purchasing books or of learning something new in mathematics, or in music, in which I at that time found a source of pleasure and amusement.

2. *Areopagitica, Works* 4.417:

If we think to regulate printing, thereby to rectify manners, we must regulate all recreations and pastimes, all that is delightful to man. No music must be heard, no song be set or sung, but what is grave or Doric. ...It will ask more than the work of twenty licensers to examine all the lutes, the violins, and the guitars in every house; they must not be suffered to prattle as they do, but must be licensed what they may say. And who shall silence all the airs and madrigals that whisper softness in chambers? The windows also and the balconies must be thought on.... The villages also must have their visitors to inquire what lectures the bagpipe and the rebeck reads, even to the balladry and the gamut of every municipal fiddler, for these are the countryman's *Arcadias* and his Montemayors.

### ii. THE FUNCTION OF MUSIC

#### a. The Effects of Music Seriously Described.

1. *Education, Works* 4.391:

The interim of unsweating themselves regularly, and convenient rest before meat, may, both with profit and delight, be taken up in recreating and composing their travailed spirits with the solemn and divine harmonies of music heard or learnt; either while the skilful organist plies his grave and fancied descant in lofty fugues, or the whole symphony with artful and unimaginable touches adorn and grace the well-studied chords of some choice composer; sometimes the lute or soft organ-stop waiting on elegant voices either to religious, martial, or civil ditties; which, if wise men and prophets be not extremely out, have a great power over dispositions and manners, to smooth and make them gentle from rustic harshness and distempered passions. The like also would not be unexpedient after meat to assist and cherish nature in her first concoction, and send their minds back to study in good tune and satisfaction.

2. *P. L.* 1.539–562:

All the while
Sonorous metal blowing martial sounds;
At which the universal host upsent
A shout that tore Hell's concave, and beyond
Frighted the reign of Chaos and old Night.
. . . Anon they move
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood
Of flutes and soft recorders—such as raised
To height of noblest temper heroes old
Arming to battle, and instead of rage
Deliberate valor breathed, firm, and unmoved
With dread of death to flight or foul retreat;
Nor wanting power to mitigate and swage
With solemn touches troubled thoughts, and chase
Anguish and doubt and fear and sorrow and pain
From mortal or immortal minds. Thus they,
Breathing united force with fixèd thought,
Moved on in silence to soft pipes that charmed
Their painful steps o'er the burnt soil.

3. *P. L.* 6.59–69:

Nor with less dread the loud
Ethereal trumpet from on high 'gan blow.
At which command the Powers Militant
That stood for Heaven, in mighty quadrate joined
Of union irresistible, moved on
In silence their bright legions to the sound

Of instrumental harmony, that breathed
Heroic ardor to adventurous deeds
Under their godlike leaders, in the cause
Of God and His Messiah. On they move,
Indissolubly firm.

4. *P. L.* 2.546–557:

Others, more mild,
Retreated in a silent valley, sing
With notes angelical to many a harp
Their own heroic deeds, and hapless fall
By doom of battle, and complain that Fate
Free virtue should enthrall to force or chance.
Their song was partial; but the harmony
(What could it less when spirits immortal sing?)
Suspended Hell, and took with ravishment
The thronging audience. In discourse more sweet
(For eloquence the soul, song charms the sense)
Others apart sat on a hill retired.

5. *Comus* 170–174:

This way the noise was, if mine ear be true,
My best guide now. Methought it was the sound
Of riot and ill-managed merriment,
Such as the jocund flute or gamesome pipe
Stirs up among the loose unlettered hinds.

6. *Comus* 623–625:

He loved me well, and oft would beg me sing:
Which when I did, he on the tender grass
Would sit, and hearken even to ecstasy.

7. *Il Pens.* 161–166:

There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced quire below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.

8. *Nativity* 93–148:

IX

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
As never was by mortal finger strook,
Divinely warbled voice
Answering the stringèd noise,
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The air such pleasure loth to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

X

Nature that heard such sound
Beneath the hollow round
Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won
To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling;
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all Heaven and Earth in happier union.

XI

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shamefaced night arrayed,
The helmèd cherubim
And sworded seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn quire
With unexpressive notes to Heaven's new-born Heir.

XII

Such music (as 'tis said)
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the welt'ring waves their oozy channel keep.

XIII

Ring out ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears
(If ye have power to touch our senses so),
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
And let the base of Heaven's deep organ blow;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to th' angelic symphony.

XIV

For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back and fetch the age of gold,
And speckled vanity
Will sicken soon, and die,
And lep'rous sin will melt from earthly mold,
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

XV

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down-steering,
And Heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace-hall.

### b. The Effects of Music Extravagantly Described.

1. *L'All.* 135–150:

And ever, against eating cares,
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,
Married to immortal verse,
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,
In notes with many a winding bout
Of linkèd sweetness long drawn out

With wanton heed and giddy cunning,
The melting voice through mazes running,
Untwisting all the chains that tie
The hidden soul of harmony;
That Orpheus' self may heave his head
From golden slumber on a bed
Of heaped Elysian flowers, and hear
Such strains as would have won the ear
Of Pluto to have quite set free
His half-regained Eurydice.

2. *Il Pens.* 103–108:

But, O sad Virgin! that thy power
Might raise Musaeus from his bower;
Or bid the soul of Orpheus sing
Such notes as, warbled to the string,
Drew iron tears down Pluto's cheek,
And made Hell grant what love did seek.

3. *Comus* 82–88:

But first I must put off
These my sky-robes, spun out of Iris' woof,
And take the weeds and likeness of a swain
That to the service of this house belongs,
Who, with his soft pipe and smooth-dittied song,
Well knows to still the wild winds when they roar,
And hush the waving woods.

4. *Comus* 244–264:

Can any mortal mixture of earth's mold
Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
Sure something holy lodges in that breast,
And with these raptures moves the vocal air
To testify his hidden residence.
How sweetly did they float upon the wings
Of silence, through the empty-vaulted night,
At every fall smoothing the raven down
Of darkness till it smiled! I have oft heard

My mother Circe with the Sirens three,
Amidst the flowery-kirtled Naiades,
Culling their potent herbs and baleful drugs,
Who, as they sung, would take the prisoned soul,
And lap it in Elysium: Scylla wept,
And chid her barking waves into attention,
And fell Charybdis murmured soft applause.
Yet they in pleasing slumber lulled the sense,
And in sweet madness robbed it of itself;
But such a sacred and home-felt delight,
Such sober certainty of waking bliss,
I never heard till now.

5. *Comus* 494–496:

Thyrsis! whose artful strains have oft delayed
The huddling brook to hear his madrigal,
And sweetened every musk-rose of the dale.

6. *Comus* 555–564:

At last a soft and solemn-breathing sound
Rose like a steam of rich distilled perfumes,
And stole upon the air, that even Silence
Was took ere she was ware, and wished she might
Deny her nature, and be never more
Still to be so displaced. I was all ear,
And took in strains that might create a soul
Under the ribs of Death. But, oh! ere long
Too well I did perceive it was the voice
Of my most honored Lady, your dear sister.

7. *Sonnet* 2. 9–14:

Quando tu vaga parli, o lieta canti,
Che mover possa duro alpestre legno,
Guardi ciascun a gli occhi ed a gli orecchi
L'entrata chi di te si truova indegno;
Grazia sola di sù gli vaglia, innanti
Che'l disio amoroso al curor s'invecchi.

Translation by Cowper, p. 621:

When gracefully thou speak'st, or singest gay,
Such strains, as might the senseless forest move,
Ah then—turn each his eyes, and ears, away,
Who feels himself unworthy of thy love!
Grace can alone preserve him, ere the dart
Of fond desire yet reach his inmost heart.

8. *Sonnet* 4.10–12:

Parole adorne di lingua più d'una,
E 'l cantar che di mezzo l'emispero
Traviar ben può la faticosa Luna.

Translation by Cowper, p. 622:

Words exquisite, of idioms more than one,
And song, whose fascinating power might bind,
And from her sphere draw down the laboring Moon.

9. *Ad Leonoram* 1. 1-10:

Angelus unicuique suus (sic credite, gentes)
Obtigit aethereis ales ab ordinibus.
Quid mirum, Leonora, tibi si gloria maior?
Nam tua praesentem vox sonat ipsa Deum.
Aut Deus, aut vacui certe mens tertia caeli,
Per tua secreto guttura serpit agens;
Serpit agens, facilisque docet mortalia corda
Sensim immortali assuescere posse sono.
Quod, si cuncta quidem Deus est, per cunctaque fusus,
In te una loquitur, caetera mutus habet.

Translation by William Vaughn Moody, pp. 344–345:

To every man his angel is allotted (believe it, ye people!), his winged angel from the ethereal hierarchies. What wonder, Leonora, if a greater glory be yours? Either God himself, or surely at least some third Mind intermediate in Heaven, thrills mysteriously through your throat; thrills, suavely accustoming mortal hearts by tender degrees to immortal sounds. Yea, if all things be God, and He be transfused through all, yet in you alone He speaks, the rest He possesses in silence.

10. *Ad Leonoram* 2. 1-12:

Altera Torquatum cepit Leonora poetam,
Cuius ab insano cessit amore furens.
Ah miser ille tuo quanto felicius aevo
Perditus, et propter te, Leonora, foret!
Et te Pieria sensisset voce canentem
Aurea maternae fila movere lyrae!
Quamvis Dircaeo torsisset lumina Pentheo
Saevior, aut totus desipuisset iners.
Tu tamen errantes caeca vertigine sensus
Voce eadem poteras composuisse tua;
Et poteras, aegro spirans sub corde quietem,
Flexanimo cantu restituisse sibi.

Translation by Cowper, p. 598:

Another Leonora once inspired
Tasso, with fatal love to frenzy fired,
But how much happier, lived he now, were he,
Pierced with whatever pangs for love of thee!
Since could he hear that heavenly voice of thine,
With Adriana's lute of sound divine,
Fiercer than Pentheus' though his eye might roll,
Or idiot apathy benumb his soul,
You still, with medicinal sounds, might cheer
His senses wandering in a blind career;
And sweetly breathing through his wounded breast,
Charm with, soul-soothing song, his thoughts to rest.

11. *Ad Leonoram* 3. 1–8:

Credula quid liquidam Sirena, Neapoli, iactas,
Claraque Parthenopes fana Archeloiados,
Littoreamque tua defunctam Naiada ripa
Corpora Chalcidico sacra dedisse rogo?
Illa quidem vivitque, et amoena Tibridis unda
Mutavit rauci murmura Pausilipi.
Illic, Romulidum studiis ornata secundis,
Atque homines cantu detinet atque Deos.

Translation by Cowper, p. 598:

Naples, too credulous, ah! boast no more
The sweet-voiced Siren buried on thy shore,
That, when Parthenope deceased, she gave
Her sacred dust to a Chalcidic grave,
For still she lives, but has exchanged the hoarse
Pausilipo for Tiber's placid course,
Where, idol of all Rome, she now in chains
Of magic song, both gods and men detains.

And see IV. I. 1, 2.

### iii. THE ART OF MUSIC

#### a. References to Technical Proficiency.

1. *Sonnet* 17, 9–14:

What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of those delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

And see III. C. ii. a. 1; b. 1; D. 5.

#### b. Technical Terms in Music.

1. *Solemn Music* 1–28:

Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ,
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce;
And to our high-raised fantasy present
That undisturbèd song of pure concent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-colored throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout and solumn jubilee;
Where the bright seraphim in burning row

Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow,
And the cherubic host in thousand quires
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly;
That we on earth with undiscording voice
May rightly answer that melodious noise;
As once we did, till disproportioned sin
Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord; whose love their motion swayed
In perfect diapason, whilst they stood
In first obedience and their state of good.
O may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with Heaven, till God ere long
To His celestial consort us unite,
To live with Him, and sing in endless morn of light.

2. *P. L.*, 11. 554–559:

The sound
Of instruments that made melodious chime
Was heard, of harp and organ, and who moved
Their stops and chords was seen; his volant touch,
Instinct through all proportions low and high,
Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue.

3. *Passion* 4:

My Muse with angels did divide to sing.

4. *P. L.* 4.600–603:

Silence accompanied; for beast and bird,
They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
She all night long her amorous descant sung.

5. *P. L.* 6.307–315:

From each hand with speed retired,
Where erst was thickest fight, the angelic throng,

And left large field, unsafe within the wind
Of such commotion: such as (to set forth
Great things by small) if, Nature's concord broke,
Among the constellations war were sprung,
Two planets, rushing from aspect malign
Of fiercest opposition, in mid sky
Should combat and their jarring spheres confound.[1]

6. *Comus* 1018–1021:

Mortals, that would follow me,
Love virtue; she alone is free.
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime.

7. *P. L.* 2.879–881:

On a sudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,
The infernal doors.

### iv. FIGURES OF SPEECH AND ILLUSTRATIONS BASED UPON THE ART OF MUSIC

1. *An Apology, Works* 3.298:

Now although it be a digression from the ensuing matter, yet because it shall not be said I am apter to blame others than to make trial myself, and that I may after this harsh discord touch upon a smoother string, a while to entertain myself and him that list with some more pleasing fit, . . . I shall be so troublesome to this disclaimer for once as to show him what he might have better said in their praise.

2. *An Apology, Works* 3.304:

Thus far I have digressed, Readers, from my former subject: but into such a path as I doubt not ye will agree with me to be much fairer and more delightful than the roadway I was in. And how to break off suddenly into those jarring notes, which this confuter hath set me, I must be wary, unless I can provide against offending the ear, as some musicians are wont skilfully to fall out of one key into another without breach of harmony.

[1] Cf. *Nativity* 125–132.

3. *Animadversions, Works* 3.209:

As for the words, it is more to be feared lest the same continually should make them careless or sleepy, than that variety on the same known subject should distract: variety (as both music and rhetoric teacheth us) erects and rouses an auditory, like the masterful running over many chords and divisions; whereas if men should ever be thumming [? thrumming] the drone of one plain-song, it would be a dull opiate to the most wakeful attention.

4. *Animadversions, Works* 3.215:

We shall adhere close to the scriptures of God which He hath left us as the just and adequate measure of truth, fitted and proportioned to the diligent study, memory, and use of every faithful man, whose every part concenting and making up the harmonious symmetry of complete instruction is able to set out to us a perfect man of God.

5. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 1, chap. 1), *Works* 3.98:

Nor is there any sociable perfection in this life, civil or sacred, that can be above discipline, but she is that which with her musical cords [='chords'] preserves and holds all the parts thereof together.

6. *Reformation* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.57:

There is no civil government that hath been known, . . . more divinely and harmoniously tuned, . . . than is the Commonwealth of England.

7. *Animadversions, Works* 3.202:

Set the grave counsels up upon their shelves again, and string them hard, lest their various and jangling opinions put their leaves into a flutter.

8. *P. L.* 1.705–709:

A third as soon had formed within the ground
A various mold, and from the boiling cells
By strange conveyance filled each hollow nook;
As in an organ, from one blast of wind,
To many a row of pipes the sound-board breathes.

### v. The Relation between Music and Poetry

See III. C. ii. b.1, 8; IV. C. 1; H. 3, 4; I. 1-3.

## D. Graphic and Plastic Arts, and Certain Lesser Handicrafts.

1. *P. L.* 3.501–509:

Far distant he descries,
Ascending by degrees magnificent
Up to the wall of Heaven, a structure high;
At top whereof, but far more rich, appeared
The work as of a kingly palace-gate,
With frontispiece of diamond and gold
Embellished; thick with sparkling orient gems
The portal shone, inimitable on Earth
By model, or by shading pencil drawn.

2. *Eikonoclastes* (27), *Works* 3.510:

He who writes himself matryr by his own inscription is like an ill painter, who by writing on the shapeless picture which he hath drawn is fain to tell passengers what shape it is, which else no man could imagine.

3. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 1, chap. 7), *Works* 3.133:

In things artificial seldom any elegance is wrought without a superfluous waste and refuse in the transaction. No marble statue can be politely carved, no fair edifice built, without almost as much rubbish and sweeping.

4. *Animadversions, Works* 3.215:

Why do we. . .stand worshiping and admiring this unactive and lifeless Colossus [antiquity] that, like a carved giant terribly menacing to children and weaklings, lifts up his club but strikes not?. . .If you let him rest upon his basis, he may perhaps delight the eyes of some with his huge and mountainous bulk, and the quaint workmanship of his massy limbs; but if ye go about to take him in pieces, ye mar him.

5. *Elegia* 6.37–40:

Nunc quoque Thressa tibi caelato barbitos auro
Insonat arguta molliter icta manu:
Auditurque chelys suspensa tapetia circum,
Virgineos tremula quae regat arte pedes.

Translation by Cowper, p. 594:

> The lute now also sounds, with gold in-wrought,
> And touched with flying fingers, nicely taught;
> In tapestried halls, high-roofed, the sprightly lyre
> Directs the dancers of the virgin quire.

6. *Eikonoclastes* (27), *Works* 3.513:

To be struck as mute and motionless as a parliament of tapestry in the hangings.

7. *1 Defence* (chap. 10), *Works* 6.165:

Quid ergo caeteri, qui sese nolentibus tantum facinus fieri sunt passi? An stipites, an trunci hominum, an forte quales illi in scena Virgiliana?

> Purpurea intexti tollunt aulaea Britanni?

Non enim veros tu quidem Britannos, sed pictos nescio quos, vel etiam acu pictos videris mihi velle dicere.

Translation, *Works* 8.222–223:

What were the rest of the people then that suffered so great a thing to be transacted against their will? Were they stocks and stones, were they mere trunks of men only, or such images of Britons as Virgil describes to have been wrought in tapestry?

> Purpurea intexti tollunt aulaea Britanni:
> And Britons interwove held up the purple hangings.

For you describe no true Britains, but painted ones, or rather needle-wrought men instead of them.

8. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 6), *Works* 5.291–292:

He [Edward the Confessor] is said to be . . . at festivals nothing puffed up with the costly robes he wore, which his queen with curious art had woven for him in gold.

9. *Comus* 749–750:

> Coarse complexions
> And cheeks of sorry grain will serve to ply
> The sampler.

And see III. A. 2, 4.

## IV. POETRY IN GENERAL

### A. Eulogy of the Art.

1. *Ad Patrem* 1–55:

Nunc mea Pierios cupiam per pectora fontes
Irriguas torquere vias, totumque per ora
Volvere laxatum gemino de vertice rivum;
Ut, tenues oblita sonos, audacibus alis
Surgat in officium venerandi Musa parentis.
Hoc utcunque tibi gratum, pater optime, carmen
Exiguum meditatur opus: nec novimus ipsi
Aptius a nobis quae possint munera donis
Respondere tuis, quamvis nec maxima possint
Respondere tuis, nedum ut par gratia donis
Esse queat, vacuis quae redditur arida verbis.
Sed tamen haec nostros ostendit pagina census,
Et quod habemus opum charta numeravimus ista,
Quae mihi sunt nullae, nisi quas dedit aurea Clio,
Quas mihi semoto somni peperere sub antro,
Et nemoris laureta sacri Parnassides umbrae.
  Nec tu, vatis opus, divinum despice carmen,
Quo nihil aethereos ortus, et semina caeli,
Nil magis humanam commendat origine mentem,
Sancta Prometheae retinens vestigia flammae.
Carmen amant Superi, tremebundaque Tartara carmen
Ima ciere valet, divosque ligare profundos,
Et triplici duros Manes adamante coercet.
Carmine sepositi retegunt arcana futuri
Phoebades, et tremulae pallentes ora Sibyllae;
Carmina sacrificus sollennes pangit ad aras,
Aurea seu sternit motantem cornua taurum,
Seu cum fata sagax fumantibus abdita fibris
Consulit, et tepidis Parcam scrutatur in extis.
Nos etiam, patrium tunc cum repetemus Olympum,
Aeternaeque morae stabunt immobilis aevi,
Ibimus auratis per caeli templa coronis,
Dulcia suaviloquo sociantes carmina plectro,

Astra quibus geminique poli convexa sonabunt.
Spiritus et rapidos qui circinat igneus orbes
Nunc quoque sidereis intercinit ipse choreis
Immortale melos et inenarrabile carmen,
Torrida dum rutilus compescit sibila Serpens,
Demissoque ferox gladio mansuescit Orion,
Stellarum nec sentit onus Maurusius Atlas.
Carmina regales epulas ornare solebant,
Cum nondum luxus, vastaeque immensa vorago
Nota gulae, et modico spumabat coena Lyaeo.
Tum de more sedens festa ad convivia vates,
Aesculea intonsos redimitus ab arbore crines,
Heroumque actus imitandaque gesta canebat,
Et Chaos, et positi late fundamina Mundi,
Reptantesque deos, et alentes numina glandes,
Et nondum Aetnaeo quaesitum fulmen ab antro.
Denique quid vocis modulamen inane iuvabit,
Verborum sensusque vacans, numerique loquacis?
Silvestres decet iste choros, non Orphea, cantus,
Qui tenuit fluvios, et quercubus addidit aures,
Carmine, non cithara, simulacraque functa canendo
Compulit in lacrymas: habet has a carmine laudes.

Translation by Cowper, pp. 605–606:

Oh that Pieria's spring would through my breast
Pour its inspiring influence, and rush
No rill, but rather an o'erflowing flood!
That, for my venerable father's sake
All meaner themes renounced, my Muse, on wings
Of duty borne, might reach a loftier strain.
For thee, my father! howsoe'er it please,
She frames this slender work; nor know I aught
That may thy gifts more suitably requite;
Though to requite them suitably would ask
Returns much nobler, and surpassing far
The meagre stores of verbal gratitude:
But, such as I possess, I send thee all.

This page presents thee in their full amount
With thy son's treasures, and the sum is naught;
Naught, save the riches that from airy dream
In secret grottos and in laurel bowers,
I have, by golden Clio's gift, acquired.
   Verse is a work divine; despise not thou
Verse therefore, which evinces (nothing more)
Man's heavenly source, and which, retaining still
Some scintillations of Promethean fire,
Bespeaks him animated from above.
The gods love verse; the infernal powers themselves
Confess the influence of verse, which stirs
The lowest deep, and binds in triple chains
Of adamant both Pluto and the shades.
In verse the Delphic priestess and the pale
Tremulous sibyl made the future known;
And he who sacrifices, on the shrine
Hangs verse, both when he smites the threatening bull
And when he spreads his reeking entrails wide
To scrutinize the fates enveloped there.
We too, ourselves, what time we seek again
Our native skies, and one eternal now
Shall be the only measure of our being,
Crowned all with gold, and chanting to the lyre
Harmonious verse, shall range the courts above,
And make the starry firmament resound.
And, even now, the fiery spirit pure
That wheels yon circling orbs, directs himself
Their mazy dance with melody of verse
Unutterable, immortal, hearing which,
Huge Ophiuchus holds his hiss suppressed,
Orion, softened, drops his ardent blade,
And Atlas stands unconscious of his load.
Verse graced of old the feasts of kings, ere yet
Luxurious dainties, destined to the gulf
Immense of gluttony, were known, and ere
Lyaeus deluged yet the temperate board.
Then sat the bard a customary guest

To share the banquet, and, his length of locks
With beechen honors bound, proposed in verse
The characters of heroes and their deeds,
To imitation, sang of Chaos old,
Of nature's birth, of gods that crept in search
Of acorns fallen, and of the thunderbolt
Not yet produced from Etna's fiery cave.
And what avails, at last, tune without voice,
Devoid of matter? Such may suit perhaps
The rural dance, but such was ne'er the song
Of Orpheus, whom the streams stood still to hear,
And the oaks followed. Not by chords alone
Well-touched, but by resistless accents more
To sympathetic tears the ghosts themselves
He moved; these praises to his verse he owes.

## B. The Subject-Matter of Poetry.

### 1. *1 Defence* (Preface), *Works* 6.3:

Quin et ipse ab ineunte adolescentia iis eram studiis incensus, quae me ad optima quaeque si minus facienda, at certe laudanda incitatum ferebant.

### Translation, *Works* 8.3:

From my very youth I have been bent extremely upon such sort of studies as inclined me, if not to do great things myself, at least to celebrate those that did.[1]

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[1] Cf. *2 Defence, Works* 6.278–279:
Is solus magnus est appellandus, qui res magnas aut gerit, aut docet, aut digne scribit: res autem magnae sunt solae, quae vel vitam hanc nostram efficiunt beatam, aut saltem cum honestate commodam atque jucundam, vel ad alteram ducunt beatiorem.

Translation by Fellowes (6.392–393):

He alone is worthy of the appelation ['great'] who either does great things, or teaches how they may be done, or describes them with a suitable majesty when they have been done: but those only are great things which tend to render life more happy, which increase the innocent enjoyments and comforts of existence, or which pave the way to a state of future bliss more permanent and more pure.

2. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.146–147:

These abilities [of a poet]. . .are of power. . .to celebrate in glorious and lofty hymns the throne and equipage of God's almightiness, and what He works and what He suffers to be wrought with high providence in His Church, to sing the victorious agonies of martyrs and saints, the deeds and triumphs of just and pious nations doing valiantly through faith against the enemies of Christ, to deplore the general relapses of kingdoms and states from justice and God's true worship. Lastly whatsoever in religion is holy and sublime, in virtue amiable or grave, whatsoever hath passion or admiration in all the changes of that which is called fortune from without, or the wily sublteties and refluxes of man's thoughts from within, all these things with a solid and treatable smoothness to paint out and describe.

3. *Comus* 513–519:

'Tis not vain or fabulous,
(Though so esteemed by shallow ignorance)
What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,
Storied of old in high immortal verse
Of dire Chimeras and enchanted isles,
And rifted rocks whose entrance leads to Hell;
For such there be—but unbelief is blind.

And see IV. A. 1; L. 1; XI. H. 1; XX. 1.

## C. THE FUNCTION OF POETRY (to Teach and to Delight).

1. *P. R.* 4.254–260:

There [at Athens] thou shalt hear and learn the secret power
Of harmony, in tones and numbers hit
By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,
Aeolian charms and Dorian lyric odes,
And his who gave them breath, but higher sung,
Blind Melesigenes, thence Homer called,
Whose poem Phoebus challenged for his own.

2. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.146:

These abilities [of a poet], wheresoever they be found, are the inspired gift of God rarely bestowed, but yet to some (though most abuse) in every nation; and are of power beside the office of a pulpit to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility, to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune.

3. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.147:

Teaching[1] over the whole book of sanctity and virtue through all the instances of example to those especially of soft and delicious temper, who will not so much as look upon Truth herself unless they see her elegantly dressed, that whereas the paths of honesty and good life appear now rugged and difficult, though they be indeed easy and pleasant, they would then appear to all men both easy and pleasant though they were rugged and difficult indeed.

4. *Tetrachordon* (Gen.2.24), *Works* 4.174:

If any shall ask, Why 'domestic' in the definition? I answer that because both in the Scriptures, and in the gravest poets and philosophers, I find the properties and excellencies of a wife set out only from domestic virtues.

5. *1 Defence* (chap. 2), *Works* 6.42:

Utcunque sit, profecto verba psallentis, et sententiae affectibus plenae haudquaquam sunt ad jus explicandum accommodatae, aut eo trahendae.

Translation, *Works* 8.58:

But whatever he means, the words of a Psalm are too full of poetry, and this Psalm too full of passion, to afford us any exact definitions of right and justice; nor is it proper to argue anything of that nature from 'em.

And see X. 2.

### D. THE POWER OF POETRY TO CONFER FAME OR IMMORTALITY.

1. *Comus* 515–516:

What the sage poets, taught by the heavenly Muse,
Storied of old in high immortal verse.

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[1] The reference is to the poet.

2. *On Shakespeare* 1–16:

What needs my Shakespeare for his honored bones
The labor of an age in pilèd stones,
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pryamid?
Dear son of memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a live-long monument.
For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavoring art,
Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took;
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving;
And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie,
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

3. *Ad Patrem* 111–120:

At tibi, care pater, postquam non aequa merenti
Posse referre datur, nec dona rependere factis,
Sit memorasse satis, repetitaque munera grato
Percensere animo, fidaeque reponere menti.
Et vos, O nostri, iuvenilia carmina, lusus,
Si modo perpetuos sperare audebitis annos,
Et domini superesse rogo, lucemque tueri,
Nec spisso rapient oblivia nigra sub Orco,
Forsitan has laudes, decantatumque parentis
Nomen, ad exemplum, sero servabitis aevo.

Translation by Cowper, p. 607–608:

But thou! my Father! since to render thanks
Equivalent, and to requite by deeds
Thy liberality, exceeds my power,
Suffice it that I thus record thy gifts,
And bear them treasured in a grateful mind!
Ye too, the favorite pastime of my youth,
My voluntary numbers, if ye dare

To hope longevity, and to survive
Your master's funeral, not soon absorbed
In the oblivious Lethaean gulf,
Shall to futurity perhaps convey
This theme, and by these praises of my sire
Improve the fathers of a distant age!

4. *Mansus* 1–12, 24–26:

Haec quoque, Manse, tuae meditantur carmina laudi
Pierides; tibi, Manse, choro notissime Phoebi,
Quandoquidem ille alium haud aequo est dignatus honore,
Post Galli cineres, et Mecaenatis Hetrusci.
Tu quoque, si nostrae tantum valet aura Camoenae,
Vitrices hederas inter laurosque sedebis.
  Te pridem magno felix concordia Tasso
Iunxit, et aeternis inscripsit nomina chartis.
Mox tibi dulciloquum non inscia Musa Marinum
Tradidit; ille tuum dici se gaudet alumnum,
Dum canit Assyrios divum prolixus amores,
Mollis et Ausonias stupefecit carmine nymphas.

. . . . . . . . .

Ergo ego te, Clius et magni nomine Phoebi,
Manse pater, iubeo longum salvere per aevum,
Missus Hyperboreo iuvenis peregrinus ab axe.

Translation by Cowper, p. 609, 610:

These verses also to thy praise the Nine,
O Manso! happy in that theme design,
For, Gallus and Maecenas gone, they see
None such besides, or whom they love as thee;
And if my verse may give the meed of fame,
Thine too shall prove an everlasting name.
  Already such it shines in Tasso's page
(For thou wast Tasso's friend) from age to age,
And, next, the Muse consigned (not unaware
How high the charge) Marino to thy care,

Who, singing to the nymphs Adonis' praise,
Boasts thee the patron of his copious lays.

. . . . . . . . . .

I, therefore, though a stranger youth, who come
Chilled by rude blasts that freeze my northern home,
Thee dear to Clio, confident proclaim,
And thine, for Phoebus' sake, a deathless name.

5. *Sonnet* 8. 1–14:

Captain or Colonel, or Knight in Arms,
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
If deed of honor did thee ever please,
Guard them, and him within protect from harms.
He can requite thee; for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower:
The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground; and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.

6. *Prolus.* 3, *Works* 7.429:

At quanto satius esset,[1] Academici, quantoque dignius vestro nomine nunc descriptas chartula terras universas quasi oculis perambulare, et calcata vetustis heroibus inspectare loca, bellis, triumphis, et etiam illustrium poetarum fabulis nobilitatas regiones percurrere.

Translation by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.281–282:

How much better would it be, Academicians, and how much more worthy of your reputation, to walk as it were with the eyes over the universe of earth as it is portrayed in the map, to see places trodden by the ancient heroes, to traverse regions ennobled by wars, triumphs, and even the fables of illustrious poets.

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[1] Milton is arguing against the study of Scholastic philosophy.

7. *P. L.* 6.373–376:

> I might relate of thousands, and their names
> Eternize here on Earth.

And see XI. H. 3.

## E. QUALITIES OF POETIC STYLE.

1. *Education, Works* 4.389:

To which [logic and rhetoric], poetry would be made subsequent, or indeed rather precedent, as being less subtle and fine, but more simple, sensuous, and passionate.

2. *Eikonoclastes* (1), *Works* 3.376:

The simile wherewith he [Charles I] begins I was about to have found fault with, as in a garb somewhat more poetical than for a statist; but meeting with many strains of like dress in other of his essays, and hearing him reported a more diligent reader of poets than of politicians, I begun to think that the whole book might perhaps be intended a piece of poetry. The words are good, the fiction smooth and cleanly; there wanted only rime, and that, they say, is bestowed upon it lately.

## F. THE LAWS OF POETRY.

1. *Education, Works* 4.389:

That sublime art which in Aristotle's *Poetics*, in Horace, and the Italian commentaries of Castelvetro, Tasso, Mazzoni, and others, teaches what the laws are of a true epic poem, what of a dramatic, what of a lyric, what decorum is (which is the grand master-piece to observe).

2. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.145:

Whether the rules of Aristotle herein[1] are strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed, which in them that know art and use judgment is no transgression, but an enriching of art.

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[1] In the great poem that Milton considers writing.

## G. END-RIME.

1. The Verse (preceding *P.L.*, *Poetical Works*, p. 180):

The measure is English heroic verse without rime, as that of Homer in Greek, and of Virgil in Latin—rime being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced indeed since by the use of some famous modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse, than else they would have expressed them. Not without cause, therefore, some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rime both in longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best English tragedies, as a thing of itself, to all judicious ears, trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings—a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect, then, of rime so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set—the first in English—of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming.

And see IV. E. 2.

## H. METRE.

1. *Elegia* 6.5–8:

Carmine scire velis quam te redamemque colamque;
Crede mihi vix hoc carmine scire queas.
Nam neque noster amŏr modulis includitur arctis,
Nec venit ad claudos integer ipse pedes.

Translation by Cowper, p. 593:

Art thou desirous to be told how well
I love thee, and in verse? Verse cannot tell;
For verse has bounds, and must in measure move;
But neither bounds nor measure knows my love.

### 2. *Epist. Fam.* 1, *Works* 7.369:

Incredibilis enim illa et singularis animi mei gratitudo, quam tua ex debito vendicant in me merita, non constricto illo, et certis pedibus ac syllabis angustato dicendi genere exprimenda fuit, sed oratione libera, immo potius, si fieri posset, Asiatica verborum exuberantia.

### Translation by Fellowes (1, i):

For the emotions of my graditude, which your services so justly inspire, are too expansive and too warm to be expressed in the confined limits of poetical metre; they demand the unconstrained freedom of prose, or rather the exuberant richness of Asiatic phraseology.

### 3. *S. A.*, Preface:

The measure of verse used in the chorus is of all sorts, called by the Greeks monostrophic, or rather *apolelymenon,* without regard had to strophe, antistrophe, or epode; which were a kind of stanzas framed only for the music then used with the chorus that sung; not essential to the poem, and therefore not material; or, being divided into stanzas or pauses, they may be called *allaeostropha.*

### 4. Note appended to *Ad Rousium*:

Ode tribus constat strophis, totidemque antistrophis, una demum epodo clausis, quas, tametsi omnes nec versuum numero, nec certis ubique colis exacte respondeant, ita tamen secuimus, commode legendi potius, quam ad antiquos concinendi modos rationem spectantes. Alioquin hoc genus rectius fortasse dici monostrophicum debuerat. Metra partim sunt *κατὰ σχέσιν,* partim *ἀπολελυμένα.* Phaleucia quae sunt, spondaeum tertio loco bis admittunt, quod idem in secundo loco Catullus ad libitum fecit.

### Translation:

This ode is composed of three strophes and as many antistrophes, terminated by a single epode; which, although they do not all precisely correspond either in the number of the verses or with exact colons, we nevertheless thus arrange, having regard for a method suitable for reading rather than for the ancient manner of singing. Otherwise this kind of ode ought perhaps rather to be called monostrophic. The metres are in part *κατὰ σχέσιν* [relative], in part *ἀπολελυμένα* [absolute]. Those which are Phaleucian twice admit a spondee in the third place, an irregularity which Catullus permits freely in the second.

And see IV. G. 1; VII. D. 1; IX. 3; XI. D. ii. 1-4.

## I. Poetry and Music.

### 1. *Solemn Music* 1–9:

Blest pair of Sirens, pledges of Heaven's joy,
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse,
Wed your divine sounds, and mixed power employ,
Dead things with inbreathed sense able to pierce,
And to our high-raised fantasy present
That undisturbèd song of pure concent,
Aye sung before the sapphire-colored throne
To Him that sits thereon,
With saintly shout and solemn jubilee.

### 2. *Ad Patrem* 50–67:

Denique quid vocis modulamen inane iuvabit,
Verborum sensusque vacans, numerique loquacis?
Silvestres decet iste choros, non Orphea, cantus,
Qui tenuit fluvios, et quercubus addidit aures,
Carmine, non cithara, simulacraque functa canendo
Compulit in lacrymas: habet has a carmine laudes.
   Nec tu perge, precor, sacras contemnere Musas,
Nec vanas inopesque puta, quarum ipse peritus
Munere mille sonos numeros componis ad aptos,
Millibus et vocem modulis variare canoram
Doctus Arionii merito sis nominis haeres.
Nunc tibi quid mirum si me genuisse poetam
Contigerit, charo si tam prope sanguine iuncti
Cognatas artes studiumque affine sequamur?
Ipse volens Phoebus se dispertire duobus,
Altera dona mihi, dedit altera dona parenti;
Dividuumque Deum, genitorque puerque, tenemus.

Translation by Cowper, p. 606:

> And what avails, at last, tune without voice,
> Devoid of matter? Such may suit perhaps
> The rural dance, but such was ne'er the song
> Of Orpheus, whom the streams stood still to hear,
> And the oaks followed. Not by chords alone
> Well-touched, but by resistless accents more
> To sympathetic tears the ghosts themselves
> He moved: these praises to his verse he owes.
> Nor thou persist, I pray thee, still to slight
> The sacred Nine, and to imagine vain
> And useless, powers, by whom inspired, thyself
> Art skilful to associate verse with airs
> Harmonious, and to give the human voice
> A thousand modulations, heir by right
> Indisputable of Arion's fame.
> Now say, what wonder is it if a son
> Of thine delight in verse, if so conjoined
> In close affinity, we sympathize
> In social arts, and kindred studies sweet?
> Such distribution of himself to us
> Was Phoebus' choice; thou hast thy gift, and I
> Mine also, and between us we receive,
> Father and son, the whole inspiring God.

3. *Sonnet* 13 (*To Mr. H. Lawes on his Airs*) 1-14:

> Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured song
> First taught our English music how to span
> Words with just note and accent, not to scan
> With Midas' ears, committing short and long:
> Thy worth and skill exempts thee from the throng,
> With praise enough for Envy to look wan;
> To after age thou shalt be writ the man
> That with smooth air couldst humor best our tongue.
> Thou honor'st Verse, and Verse must send her wing
> To honor thee, the priest of Phoebus' quire,

That tun'st their happiest lines in hymn or story.
Dante shall give Fame leave to set thee higher
Than his Casella, whom he wooed to sing,
Met in the milder shades of Purgatory.

And see III. C. ii. b. 1, 8; IV. C. 1; XI. D. ii. 3; XX. 1.

### J. POETRY AND PROSE.

1. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.143–144:

Lastly I should not choose this manner of writing [i.e., in prose] wherein knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may account it, but of my left hand.... For although a poet soaring in the high region of his fancies with his garland and singing-robes about him, might without aplogy speak more of himself than I mean to do, yet for me sitting here below in the cool element of prose,...to venture and divulge unusual things of myself, I shall petition to the gentler sort it may not be envy to me.

And see IV. E. 1, 2.

### K. POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY.

1. *Areopagitica, Works* 4.412:

That virtue...which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure;...which was the reason why our sage and serious poet Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas, describing true temperance under the person of Guion, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know, and yet abstain.

### L. POETRY AND HISTORY.

1. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 1), *Works* 5.2–3:

Nevertheless there being others besides the first supposed author, men not unread, nor unlearned in antiquity, who admit that for approved story which the former [certain 'judicious antiquaries'] explode for fiction; and seeing that ofttimes relations heretofore accounted fabulous have been after found to contain in them many footsteps and relics of something true, as what we read in poets of the flood and giants little believed, till undoubted witnesses taught us that all was not feigned; I have therefore determined to bestow the telling over even of these reputed tales, be it for nothing else but in favor of our English poets, and rhetoricians, who by their art will know how to use them judiciously.

### M. Poetry and Rhetoric.

See IV. E. 1; L. 1.

## V. ALLEGORY

1. *Il. Pens.* 115–120:

And if aught else great bards beside
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
Of tourneys, and of trophies hung,
Of forests, and enchantments drear,
Where more is meant than meets the ear.

2. *Reformation* (Bk.2), *Works* 3.45:

O Sir, if we could but see the shape of our dear Mother England, as poets are wont to give a personal form to what they please, how would she appear, think ye, but in a mourning weed, with ashes upon her head, and tears abundantly flowing from her eyes?

3. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2, chap. 3), *Works* 3.161:

It would be helpful to us if we might borrow such authority as the rhetoricians by patent may give us, with a kind of Promethean skill to shape and fashion this outward man into the similitude of a body, and set him visible before us.

4. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 1, chap. 5), *Works* 3.119–120:

They would strain us out a certain figurative prelate, by wringing the collective allegory of those seven angels into seven single rochets.

5. *Divorce* (To the Parliament of England), *Works* 4.4.

To pursue the allegory, Custom being but a mere face, as Echo is a mere voice, rests not in her unaccomplishment until by secret inclination she accorporate herself with Error, who being a blind and serpentine body without a head, willingly accepts what he wants, and supplies what her incompleteness went seeking. Hence it is that Error supports Custom, Custom countenances Error.

And see IV. B. 3.

## VI. 'DECORUM'

1. *Eikonoclastes* (1), *Works* 3.344–345:

But he who from such a kind of psalmistry,[1] or any other verbal devotion, without the pledge and earnest of suitable deeds, can be persuaded of a zeal and true righteousness in the person, hath much yet to learn, and knows not that the deepest policy of a tyrant hath been ever to counterfeit religious. And Aristotle in his *Politics* hath mentioned that special craft among twelve other tyrannical sophisms. Neither want we examples. Andronicus Comnenus, the Byzantine emperor, though a most cruel tyrant, is reported by Nicetas to have been a constant reader of Saint Paul's Epistles; and by continual study had so incorporated the phrase and style of that transcendent apostle into all his familiar letters that the imitation seemed to vie with the original. Yet this availed not to deceive the people of that empire, who, notwithstanding his saint's vizard, tore him to pieces for his tyranny. From stories of this nature both ancient and modern which abound, the poets also, and some English, have been in this point so mindful of decorum as to put never more pious words in the mouth of any person than of a tyrant. I shall not instance an abstruse author, wherein the King might be less conversant, but one whom we well know was the closet-companion of these his solitudes, William Shakespeare, who introduces the person of Richard the Third speaking in as high a strain of piety and mortification as is uttered in any passage of this book; and sometimes to the same sense and purpose with some words in this place: 'I intended,' saith he, 'not only to oblige my friends but mine enemies.' The like saith Richard, Act 2, scene 1:

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[1] I.e., 'such a kind of psalmistry' as that professed by Charles I in the *Eikon Basiliké*.

I do not know that Englishman alive,
With whom my soul is any jot at odds,
More than the infant that is born to-night;
I thank my God for my humility.

Other stuff of this sort may be read throughout the whole tragedy, wherein the poet used not much licence in departing from the truth of history, which delivers him a deep dissembler, not of his affections only but of religion.

2. *2 Defence, Works* 6.263:

Equidem Salmasium, ut saepe alias, ita hoc loco haud obscure, si multa lectione, judicio tamen puerili et nullius usus hominem deprehendi; qui cum legere potuisset summos in Spartana civitate optime instituta magistratus, si quid forte viro malo excidisset sapientur dictum, id ei adimi jussisse, et in virum aliquem bonum ac frugi sortitione conferri, adeo id omne quod decorum dicitur ignorarit, ut e contra, quas probum atque prudentem decere sententias arbitraretur, eas homini nequissimo attribui sustineret.

Translation by Fellows (6.376–377):

I have discovered evident indications that Salmasius, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his reading, was a man of puerile judgment, and without any knowledge of the world; for though he must have read that the chief magistrates, in the well-arranged government of Sparta, were always wont to ascribe to some virtuous citizen the merit of every good saying which the worthless and the profligate might occasionally pronounce, he has shown himself so utterly ignorant of all that is called propriety, as to ascribe to the vilest of men sentiments which could become only the good and wise.

3. *Pro Se Defensio, Works* 6.363:

Non ita eram decori nescius, ut sublime quicquam aut tragicum in historia tua ponerem.

Translation:

I am not so ignorant of decorum as to set down as sublime or tragic anything in your history.

### 4. *An Apology, Works* 3.296:

One thing I beg of ye, Readers, as ye bear any zeal to learning, to eloquence, and that which is called decorum in the writing of praise, especially on such a noble argument, ye would not be offended, though I rate this cloistered lubber according to his deserts.

### 5. *Hist. Brit* (Bk. 2), *Works* 5.61–62:

I affect not set speeches in a history, unless known for certain to have been so spoken in effect as they are written, nor then unless worth rehearsal; and to invent such, though eloquently as some historians have done, is an abuse of posterity, raising in them that read other conceptions of those times and persons than were true. Much less therefore do I purpose here or elsewhere to copy out tedious orations without decorum, though in their authors composed ready to my hand.

### 6. *Tetrachordon* (Deut. 24. 1, 2), *Works* 4.176:

He would have said 'I hate putting away, saith the Lord'; and not sent word by Malachi in a sudden fallen style: 'The Lord saith that He hateth putting away.' That were a phrase to shrink the glorious omnipresence of God speaking into a kind of circumscriptive absence. And were as if a herald, in the achievement of a king, should commit the indecorum to set his helmet sideways and close, not full-faced and open in the posture of direction and command.

### 7. *1 Defence* (chap. 5), *Works* 6.106:

A philosophis ad poetas jam provocas, eo te libentissime sequimur. 'Potestatem nullis legibus, nullis judiciis obnoxiam in Graecia regis obtinuisse vel unus,' inquis, 'Aeschylus potest docere; qui in tragoedia, *Supplices*, Regem Argivorem *ἄκριτον πρύτανιν* vocat, non judicabilem rectorem,' Verum tu scito, . . . non quid poeta, sed quis apud poetam, quidque dicat, spectandum esse; variae enim personae inducuntur, nunc bonae, nunc malae, nunc sapientes, nunc simplices, non semper quid poetae videatur, sed quid cuique maxime conveniat loquentes.

### Translation, *Works* 8.145–146:

From the philosophers you appeal to the poets; and I am very willing to follow you thither. 'Aeschylus is enough to inform us that the power of the kings of Greece was such as not to be liable to the censure of any laws, or to be questioned before any human judicature; for he, in that tragedy that is called *The Suppliants*, calls the king of the Argives a governor not obnoxious to the judgment of any tribunal.' But you must know . . . that one is not to regard what the poet says, but what person in the play speaks, and what that person says; for different persons are introduced, sometimes good, sometimes bad; sometimes wise men, sometimes fools; and such words are put into their mouths as it is most proper for them to speak; not such as the poet would speak if he were to speak in his own person.

And see I. 15; IV. F. 1; VII. D. 1.; XI. H. 1; XXI. D. 10.

## VII. THE DRAMA

### A. GENERAL REFERENCES TO VARIOUS DRAMATIC FORMS.

1. *Education, Works* 4.388:

Those tragedies...that treat of household matters, as *Trachiniae, Alcestis*, and the like.

2. *Education, Works* 4.388–389:

When all these employments are well conquered, then will the choice histories, heroic poems, and Attic tragedies of stateliest and most regal argument, with all the famous political orations, offer themselves; which if they were not only read, but some of them got by memory, and solemnly pronounced with right accent and grace, as might be taught, would endue them even with the spirit and vigor of Demonsthenes or Cicero, Euripides or Sophocles.

3. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.146:

Or whether those dramatic constitutions, wherein Sophocles and Euripides reign, shall be found more doctrinal and exemplary to a nation, the Scripture also affords us a divine pastoral drama in the Song of Solomon, consisting of two persons and a double chorus, as Origen rightly judges. And the Apocalypse of Saint John is the majestic image of a high and stately tragedy, shutting up and intermingling her solemn scenes and acts with a seven-fold chorus of hallelujahs and harping symphonies; and this my opinion the grave authority of Paraeus commenting that book is sufficient to confirm.

4. *Education, Works* 4.388:

And soon after, but with wariness and good antidote, it would be wholesome enough to let them taste some choice comedies, Greek, Latin, or Italian.

5. *Elegia* 1. 27–46:

Excipit hinc fessum sinuosi pompa theatri,
Et vocat ad plausus garrula scena suos.
Seu catus auditur senior, seu prodigus haeres,
Seu procus, aut posita casside miles adest,
Sive decennali foecundus lite patronus
Detonat inculto barbara verba foro;
Saepe vafer gnato succurrit servus amanti,
Et nasum rigidi fallit ubique patris;
Saepe novos illic virgo mirata calores
Quid sit amor nescit, dum quoque nescit amat:
Sive cruentatum furiosa Tragoedia sceptrum
Quassat, et effusis crinibus ora rotat;
Et dolet, et specto, iuvat et spectasse dolendo;
Interdum et lacrymis dulcis amaror inest:
Seu puer infelix indelibata reliquit
Gaudia, et abrupto flendus amore cadit;
Seu ferus e tenebris iterat Styga criminis ultor,
Conscia funereo pectora torre movens;
Seu maeret Pelopeia domus, seu nobilis Ili,
Aut luit incestos aula Creontis avos.

Translation by Cowper, p. 583–584:

Here too I visit, or to smile or weep,
The winding theatre's majestic sweep;
The grave or gay colloquial scene recruits
My spirits, spent in learning's long pursuits;
Whether some senior shrewd, or spendthrift heir,
Suitor, or soldier now unarmed, be there,
Or some coifed brooder o'er a ten years' cause,
Thunder the Norman gibberish of the laws.
The lacquey, there, oft dupes the wary sire,
And, artful, speeds the enamored son's desire.

There, virgins oft, unconscious what they prove,
What love is know not, yet unknowing love.
Or, if impassioned Tragedy wield high
The bloody sceptre, give her locks to fly
Wild as the winds, and roll her haggard eye,
I gaze and grieve, still cherishing my grief;
At times, e'en bitter tears yield sweet relief.
As when from bliss untasted torn away,
Some youth dies, hapless, on his bridal day,
Or when the ghost, sent back from shades below,
Fills the assassin's heart with vengeful woe,
When Troy, or Argos, the dire scene affords,
Or Creon's hall laments its guilty lords.

6. *L'All.* 125–134:

There let Hymen oft appear
In saffron robe, with taper clear,
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,
With mask and antique pageantry;
Such sights as youthful poets dream
On summer eves by haunted stream.
Then to the well-trod stage anon,
If Jonson's learnèd sock be on,
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.

7. *An Apology, Works* 3.261–262:

Nor yet doth he tell us what a mime is, whereof we have no pattern from ancient writers except some fragments, which contain many accute and wise sentences. And this we know in Laertius, that the mimes of Sophron were of such reckoning with Plato as to take them nightly to read on and after make them his pillow. Scaliger describes a mime to be a poem imitating any action to stir up laughter. But this being neither poem, nor yet ridiculous, how is it but abusively taxed to be a mime? For if every book which may by chance excite to laughter here and there must be termed thus, then may the *Dialogues* of Plato . . . be esteemed as they are by that detractor in Athenaeus, no better than mimes. Because there is scarce one of them, especially wherein some notable sophister lies sweating and turmoiling under the inevitable and merciless dilemmas of Socrates, but that he who reads, were it Saturn himself, would be often robbed of more than a smile.

8. *Easy Way, Works* 5.428:

A king must be adored like a demigod with a dissolute and haughty court about him, of vast expense and luxury, masks and revels, to the debauching of our prime gentry, both male and female.

9. *Eikonoclastes,* (Preface), *Works* 3.333:

Quaint emblems and devices begged from the old pageantry of some Twelfth-Night's entertainment at Whitehall will do but ill to make a saint or martyr.

10. *Eikonoclastes* (20), *Works* 3.478:

On the scene he thrusts out first an antimask of two bugbears, Novelty and Perturbation, that the ill looks and noise of those two may, as long as possible, drive off all endeavors of a reformation.

11. *Reformation* (Bk. 1), *Works* 3.6:

An interlude to set out the pomp of prelatism.

12. *Areopagitica, Works* 4.418–419:

When God gave him reason, He gave him freedom to choose, for reason is but choosing; he had been else a mere artificial Adam, such an Adam as he is in the motions.

13. *Colasterion, Works* 4.365:

He plays the most notorious hobby-horse, jesting and striking in the luxury of his nonsense, with such poor fetches to cog a laughter from us that no antic hobnail at a morris but is more handsomely facetious.

14. *Animadversions, Works* 3.210:

You wanted but hey-pass to have made your transition like a mystical man of Stourbridge. But, for all your sleight of hand, our just exceptions against liturgy are not vanished: they stare you still in the face.

15. *Animadversions, Works* 3.213:

His former transition was in the fair about the jugglers, now he is at the pageants among the whifflers.

16. *Colasterion, Works* 4.377:

I had rather, since the life of man is likened to a scene, that all my entrances and exits might mix with such persons only whose worth erects them and their actions to a grave and tragic deportment, and not to have to do with Clowns and Vices.

17. *Eikonoclastes* (1), *Works* 3.346:

It hardly can be thought upon without some laughter that he who had acted over us so stately and so tragically should leave the world at last with such a ridiculous exit.

18. *Eikonoclastes* (1), *Works* 3.339:

The general voice of the people almost hissing him and his ill-acted regality off the stage.

## B. THE DRAMATIC AGENT AS THE AUTHOR'S MOUTHPIECE.

1. *1 Defence* (chap. 5), *Works* 6. 111–112:

Illud Senecae tragici et ad Graecos referri potest et ad Romanos:

> Victima haud ulla amplior
> Potest, magisque opima mactari Jovi
> Quam rex iniquus.

Nam si ad Herculem spectes, cujus haec sententia inducitur, quid senserint illa aetate Graecorum summi viri ostendit; si ad poetam, qui sub Nerone floruit (et sensum fere suum poetae personis optimis affingere solent) significabat et quid ipse, et quid omnes viri boni, aetate etiam Neronis, faciendum tyranno censuerint; quamque pium, quamque diis gratum esse duxerint tyrannicidium.

Translation, *Works* 8.152:

The passage of Seneca may relate both to the Romans and the Grecians: 'There cannot be a greater nor more acceptable sacrifice offered up to Jupiter than a wicked prince.' For if you consider Hercules, whose words these are, they show what the opinion was of the principal men among the Grecians in that age; if the poet, who flourished under Nero (and the most worthy persons in plays generally express the poet's own sense), then this passage shows us what Seneca himself, and all good men, even in Nero's time, thought was fit to be done to a tyrant, and how virtuous an action, how acceptable to God, they thought it to kill one.

### 2. *1 Defence* (chap. 5), *Works* 6.106:

Verum tu scito,... non quid poeta, sed quis apud poetam, quidque dicat, spectandum esse; variae enim personae inducuntur, nunc bonae, nunc malae, nunc sapientes, nunc simplices, non semper quid poetae videatur, sed quid cuique maxime conveniat loquentes.

### Translation, *Works* 8.145–146:

But you must know ... that one is not to regard what the poet says but what person in the play speaks, and what that person says; for different persons are introduced, sometimes good, sometimes bad; sometimes wise men, sometimes fools; and such words are put into their mouths as it is most proper for them to speak; not such as the poet would speak if he were to speak in his own person.

### 3. *An Apology*, *Works* 3.262:

He who was there personated was only the remonstrant; the author is ever distinguished from the person he introduces.

## C. CONDITIONS AND CONVENTIONS OF THE CONTEMPORARY STAGE.

### 1. *An Apology*, *Works* 3.267–268:

But since there is such necessity to the hearsay of a tire, a periwig, or a vizard, that plays must have been seen, what difficulty was there in that?—when in the colleges so many of the young divines, and those in next aptitude to divinity, have been seen so oft upon the stage, writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antic and dishonest gestures of Trinculos.... There, while they acted and overacted, among other young scholars, I was a spectator; they thought themselves gallant men, and I thought them fools; they made sport, and I laughed; they mispronounced, and I misliked; and to make up the Atticism, they were out, and I hissed.

2. *1 Defence,* (Preface), *Works* 6.5:

Sed eccum ipsum, crepant fores, prodit histrio in proscenium:

Date operam et cum silentio animadvertite,
Ut pernoscatis quid sibi Eunuchus velit.

Nam quiquid est, praeter solitum cothurnatus incedit.

Translation, *Works* 8.6:

But now the man comes himself, the door creaks; the actor comes upon the stage:

In silence now, and with attention wait,
That ye may learn what the Eunuch has to prate.
(Terent.)

For whatever the matter's with him, he blusters more than ordinary.

3. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 4), *Works* 5.177:

I am sensible how wearisome it may likely be to read of so many bare and reasonless actions, so many names of kings one after another, acting little more than mute persons in a scene.

4. *1 Defence,* (Preface), *Works* 6.6:

Tyrannus enim, quasi histrionalis quidam rex, larva tantum et persona regis; non verus rex est.

Translation, *Works* 8.7–8:

For a tyrant is but like a king upon a stage, a man in a vizor, and acting the part of a king in a play; he is not really a king.

## D. VARIOUS OBSERVATIONS UPON TRAGEDY IN GENERAL, AND UPON *Samson Agonistes* IN PARTICULAR.

### 1. The Preface to *Samson Agonistes* (*Of that sort of Dramatic Poem which is called Tragedy*):

Tragedy, as it was anciently composed, hath been ever held the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all other poems; therefore said by Aristotle to be of power, by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such-like passions; that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight, stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. Nor is Nature wanting in her own effects to make good his assertion; for so in physic things of melancholic hue and quality are used against melancholy, sour against sour, salt to remove salt humors. Hence philosophers and other gravest writers, as Cicero, Plutarch, and others, frequently cite out of tragic poets, both to adorn and illustrate their discourse. The Apostle Paul himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of Euripides into the text of Holy Scripture, 1 Cor. 15. 33; and Paraeus, commenting on the Revelation, divides the whole book, as a tragedy, into acts, distinguished each by a chorus of heavenly harpings and song between. Heretofore men in highest dignity have labored not a little to be thought able to compose a tragedy. Of that honor Dionysius the elder was no less ambitious than before of his attaining to the tyranny. Augustus Caesar also had begun his *Ajax*, but, unable to please his own judgment with what he had begun, left it unfinished. Seneca the philosopher is by some thought the author of those tragedies (at least the best of them) that go under that name. Gregory Nazianzen, a Father of the Church, thought it not unbeseeming the sanctity of his person to write a tragedy, which he entitled *Christ Suffering*. This is mentioned to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day, with other common interludes; happening through the poet's error of intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity, or introducing trivial and vulgar persons—which by all judicious hath been counted absurd, and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people. And, though ancient tragedy use no prologue, yet using sometimes, in case of self-defence or explanation, that which Martial calls an Epistle; in behalf of this tragedy, coming forth after the ancient manner, much different from what among us passes for best, thus much beforehand may be *epistled:* that chorus is here introduced after the Greek manner, not ancient only but modern, and still in use among the Italians. In the modeling therefore of this poem, with good reason, the Ancients and Italians are rather followed, as of much more authority and fame. The measure of verse used in the chorus is of all sorts, called by the Greeks monostrophic, or rather *apolelymenon*, without regard had to strophe, antistrophe, or epode; which were a kind of stanzas framed only for the music, then used with the chorus that sung; not essential to the poem, and therefore not material; or, being divided into stanzas or pauses, they may be called *allaeostropha*. Division into act and scene, referring chiefly to the stage (to which this work never was intended), is here omitted.

It suffices if the whole drama be found not produced beyond the fifth act. Of the style and uniformity, and that commonly called the plot, whether intricate or explicit—which is nothing indeed but such economy, or disposition of the fable, as may stand best with verisimilitude and decorum—they only will best judge who are not unacquainted with Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, the three tragic poets unequaled yet by any, and the best rule to all who endeavor to write tragedy. The circumscription of time, wherein the whole drama begins and ends, is, according to ancient rule and best example, within the space of twenty-four hours.

## E. THE FUNCTION OF TRAGEDY.

1. *P. R.* 4.261–266:

Thence what the lofty grave tragedians taught
In chorus or iambic, teachers best
Of moral prudence, with delight received
In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,
High actions and high passions best describing.

2. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.147–148:

But because the spirit of man cannot demean itself lively in this body without some recreating intermission of labor and serious things, it were happy for the Commonwealth if our magistrates, as in those famous governments of old, would take into their care not only the deciding of our contentious law-cases and brawls, but the managing of our public sports and festival pastimes, that they might be, not such as were authorized a while since, the provocations of drunkenness and lust, but such as may inure and harden our bodies by martial exercises to all warlike skill and performance, and may civilize, adorn, and make discreet our minds by the learned and affable meeting of frequent academies, and the procurement of wise and artful recitations sweetened with eloquent and graceful enticements to the love and practice of justice, temperance, and fortitude, instructing and bettering the nation at all opportunities, that the call of wisdom and virtue may be heard everywhere—as Solomon saith, 'She crieth without, she uttereth her voice in the streets, in the top of high places, in the chief concourse, and in the openings of the gates.' Whether this may not be not only in pulpits, but after another persuasive method, at set and solemn panegyries, in theatres, porches, or what other place or way may win most upon the people to receive at once both recreation and instruction, let them in authority consult.

3. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.146:

These abilities [of the dramatic poet]...are of power beside the office of a pulpit...to allay the perturbations of the mind, and set the affections in right tune.

4. *P. L.* 10.21–25:

Soon as the unwelcome news[1]
From Earth arrived at Heaven-gate, displeased
All were who heard; dim sadness did not spare
That time celestial visages, yet, mixed
With pity, violated not their bliss.

5. *S. A.* 1721–1724:

Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,
Dispraise, or blame; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.
Let us go find the body where it lies.

6. *S. A.* 1754–1757:

His servants He, with new acquist
Of true experience from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismissed,
And calm of mind, all passion spent.

And see VII. D. 1 (i. e., the opening of the Preface to *S. A.*).

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[1] The news of man's transgression. Milton regards the sin in the Garden as constituting a 'tragic episode' in the structure of his epic. Cf. *P. L.* 9.5 ff.

## F. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF TRAGEDY.

1. *Il Pens.* 97–102:

Sometime let gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by,
Presenting Thebes, or Pelops' line,
Or the tale of Troy divine,
Or what (though rare) of later age
Ennobled hath the buskined stage.

2. *An Apology, Works* 3.293:

For a satyr, as it was born out of a tragedy, so ought to resemble his parentage to strike high, and adventure dangerously, at the most eminent vices among the greatest persons.

And see IV. B. 2; VII. E. 1.

## G. STRUCTURAL CONVENTIONS OF TRAGEDY.

See VII. D. 1 (i.e., the last paragraph of the Preface to *S. A.*).

## H. THE CHARACTER OF THE TRAGIC HERO.

1. *S. A.* 164–175:

O mirror of our fickle state,
Since man on earth, unparalleled,
The rarer thy example stands,
By how much from the top of wondrous glory,
Strongest of mortal men,
To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fallen!
For him I reckon not in high estate
Whom long descent of birth,
Or the sphere of fortune, raises;
But thee, whose strength, while virtue was her mate,
Might have subdued the earth,
Universally crowned with highest praises.

2. *S. A.* 667–708:

God of our fathers! what is man,
That Thou towards him with hand so various,
Or might I say contrarious,
Temper'st Thy providence through his short course:
Not evenly, as Thou rul'st
The angelic orders, and inferior creatures mute,
Irrational and brute?
Nor do I name of men the common rout,
That, wandering loose about,
Grow up and perish as the summer fly,
Heads without name, no more remembered;
But such as Thou hast solemnly elected,
With gifts and graces eminently adorned,
To some great work, Thy glory,
And people's safety, which in part they effect.
Yet toward these, thus dignified, Thou oft,
Admist their height of noon,
Changest Thy countenance and Thy hand, with no regard
Of highest favors past
From Thee on them, or them to Thee of service.
Nor only dost degrade them, or remit
To life obscured, which were a fair dismission,
But throw'st them lower than Thou didst exalt them high;
Unseemly falls in human eye,
Too grievous for the trespass or omission;
Oft leav'st them to the hostile sword
Of heathen and profane, their carcasses
To dogs and fowls a prey, or else captived;
Or to the unjust tribunals, under change of times,
And condemnation of the ungrateful multitude.
If these they scape, perhaps in poverty
With sickness and disease Thou bow'st them down,
Painful diseases and deformed,
In crude old age;
Though not disordinate, yet causeless suffering
The punishment of dissolute days. In fine,

Just or unjust alike seem miserable,
For oft alike both come to evil end.
So deal not with this once Thy glorious champion,
The image of Thy strength, and mighty minister.
What do I beg? how hast Thou dealt already!
Behold him in this state calamitous, and turn
His labors, for Thou canst, to peaceful end.

## I. References to the Tragic Flaw in the Character of Samson.

1. *S. A.* 233–236:

Of what now I suffer
She was not the prime cause, but I myself,
Who, vanquished with a peal of words (O weakness!)
Gave up my fort of silence to a woman.

2. *S. A.* 373–382:

Appoint not heavenly disposition, father.
Nothing of all these evils hath befallen me
But justly; I myself have brought them on;
Sole author I, sole cause. If aught seem vile,
As vile hath been my folly, who have profaned
The mystery of God, given me under pledge
Of vow, and have betrayed it to a woman,
A Canaanite, my faithless enemy.
This well I knew, nor was at all surprised,
But warned by oft experience.

3. *S. A.* 488–509:

Let me here,
As I deserve, pay on my punishment,
And expiate, if possible, my crime,
Shameful garrulity. To have revealed
Secrets of *men*, the secrets of a friend,
How heinous had the fact been, how deserving
Contempt and scorn of all—to be excluded
All friendship, and avoided as a blab,

The mark of fool set on his front!
But I *God's* counsel have not kept, His holy secret
Presumptuously have published, impiously,
Weakly at least and shamefully—a sin
That Gentiles in their parables condemn
To their abyss and horrid pains confined.

4. *S. A.* 38–54:

Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza, at the mill with slaves,
Himself in bonds under Philistian yoke.
Yet stay; let me not rashly call in doubt
Divine prediction. What if all foretold
Had been fulfilled but through mine own default?
Whom have I to complain of but myself,
Who this high gift of strength committed to me,
In what part lodged, how easily bereft me,
Under the seal of silence could not keep,
But weakly to a woman must reveal it,
O'ercome with importunity and tears?
O impotence of mind, in body strong!
But what is strength without a double share
Of wisdom?

5. *S. A.* 193–205:

Ye see, O friends,
How many evils have enclosed me round;
Yet that which was the worst now least afflicts me,
Blindness; for, had I sight, confused with shame,
How could I once look up, or heave the head,
Who, like a foolish pilot, have shipwrecked
My vessel trusted to me from above,
Gloriously rigged, and for a word, a tear,
Fool! have divulged the secret gift of God
To a deceitful woman? Tell me, friends,
Am I not sung and proverbed for a fool
In every street? Do they not say, 'How well
Are come upon him his deserts'?

6. *S. A.* 420–433:

I cannot praise thy marriage-choices, son—
Rather approved them not; but thou didst plead
Divine impulsion prompting how thou might'st
Find some occasion to infest our foes.
I state not that; this I am sure, our foes
Found soon occasion thereby to make thee
Their captive and their triumph; thou the sooner
Temptation found'st or over-potent charms
To violate the sacred trust of silence
Deposited within thee; which to have kept
Tacit was in thy power. True; and thou bear'st
Enough, and more, the burden of that fault;
Bitterly hast thou paid, and still art paying,
That rigid score.

## VIII. THE EPIC

### A. GENERAL REFERENCES TO EPIC POETRY AS A TYPE, AND TO PARTICULAR EPICS.

1. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.145–146:

Time serves not now, and perhaps I might seem too profuse to give any certain account of what the mind at home in the spacious circuits of her musing hath liberty to propose to herself, though of highest hope, and hardest attempting, whether that epic form whereof the two poems of Homer, and those other two of Virgil and Tasso are a diffuse, and the Book of Job a brief model; or whether the rules of Aristotle herein are strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed, which in them that know art, and use judgment is no transgression, but an enriching of art. And lastly what K[ing] or knight before the Conquest might be chosen in whom to lay the pattern of a Christian hero. And as Tasso gave to a prince of Italy his choice whether he would command him to write of Godfrey's expedition against the infidels, or Belisarius against the Goths, or Charlemagne against the Lombards; if to the instinct of nature and the emboldening of art aught may be trusted, and that there be nothing adverse in our climate or the fate of this age, it haply would be no rashness from an equal diligence and inclination to present the like offer in our own ancient stories.

2. *P. L.* 9.1–47:

No more of talk where God or Angel Guest
With Man, as with his friend, familiar used
To sit indulgent, and with him partake
Rural repast, permitting him the while
Venial discourse unblamed. I now must change
Those notes to tragic—foul distrust, and breach
Disloyal on the part of Man, revolt
And disobedience; on the part of Heaven,
Now alienated, distance and distaste,
Anger and just rebuke, and judgment given,
That brought into this World a world of woe,
Sin and her shadow Death, and Misery,
Death's harbinger. Sad task! yet argument
Not less but more heroic than the wrath
Of stern Achilles on his foe pursued
Thrice fugitive about Troy wall; or rage
Of Turnus for Lavinia disespoused;
Or Neptune's ire, or Juno's, that so long
Perplexed the Greek and Cytherea's son:
If answerable style I can obtain
Of my celestial patroness, who deigns
Her nightly visitation unimplored,
And dictates to me slumbering, or inspires
Easy my unpremeditated verse,
Since first this subject for heroic song
Pleased me, long choosing and beginning late,
Not sedulous by nature to indite
Wars, hitherto the only argument
Heroic deemed, chief mastery to dissect
With long and tedious havoc fabled knights
In battles feigned (the better fortitude
Of patience and heroic martyrdom
Unsung), or to describe races and games,
Or tilting furniture, emblazoned shields,
Impresses quaint, caparisons and steeds,
Bases and tinsel trappings, gorgeous knights
At joust and tournament; then marshaled feast

Served up in hall with sewers and seneschals:
The skill of artifice or office mean;
Not that which justly gives heroic name
To person or to poem! Me, of these
Nor skilled nor studious, higher argument
Remains, sufficient of itself to raise
That name, unless an age too late, or cold
Climate, or years, damp my intended wing
Depressed; and much they may if all be mine,
Not hers who brings it nightly to my ear.

3. *P. L.* 1.573–586:

Never, since created Man,
Met such embodied force as, named with these,
Could merit more than that small infantry
Warred on by cranes—though all the giant brood
Of Phlegra with the heroic race were joined
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
Mixed with auxiliar gods; and what resounds
In fable or romance of Uther's son,
Begirt with British and Armoric knights;
And all who since, baptized or infidel,
Jousted in Aspramount, or Montalban,
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond,
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore
When Charlemagne with all his peerage fell
By Fontarabbia.

4. *Ad Patrem* 41–49:

Carmina regales epulas ornare solebant,
Cum nondum luxus, vastaeque immensa vorago
Nota gulae, et modico spumabat coena Lyaeo.
Tum de more sedens festa ad convivia vates,
Aesculea intonsos redimitus ab arbore crines,
Heroumque actus imitandaque gesta canebat,
Et Chaos, et positi late fundamina Mundi,
Reptantesque deos, et alentes numina glandes,
Et nondum Aetnaeo quaesitum fulmen ab antro.

Translation by Cowper, p. 606:

Verse graced of old the feast of kings, ere yet
Luxurious danties, destined to the gulf
Immense of gluttony, were known, and ere
Lyaeus deluged yet the temperate board.
Then sat the bard a customary guest
To share the banquet, and, his length of locks
With beechen honors bound, proposed in verse
The characters of heroes and their deeds,
To imitation, sang of Chaos old,
Of nature's birth, of gods that crept in search
Of acorns fallen, and of the thunderbolt
Not yet produced from Etna's fiery cave.

5. *Mansus* 78–84:

O mihi si mea sors talem concedat amicum,
Phoebaeos decorasse viros qui tam bene norit,
Siquando indigenas revocabo in carmina reges,
Arturumque etiam sub terris bella moventem,
Aut dicam invictae sociali foedere mensae
Magnanimos heroas, et (O modo spiritus adsit)
Frangam Saxonicas Britonum sub Marte phalanges!

Translation by Cowper, p. 611:

Oh might so true a friend to me belong,
So skilled to grace the votaries of song,
Should I recall hereafter into rime
The kings and heroes of my native clime,
Arthur the chief, who even now prepares,
In subterraneous being, future wars,
With all his martial knights, to be restored
Each to his seat, around the federal board;
And oh, if spirit fail me not, disperse
Our Saxon plunderers in triumphant verse!

6. Damon 161–168:

Ite domum impasti; domino iam non vacat, agni.
Ipse ego Dardanias Rutupina per aequora puppes

Dicam, et Pandrasidos regnum vetus Inogeniae,
Brennumque Arviragumque duces, priscumque Belinum,
Et tandem Armoricos Britonum sub lege colonos;
Tum gravidam Arturo fatali fraude Iogernen;
Mendaces vultus, assumptaque Gorlois arma,
Merlini dolus.

Translation by Cowper, p. 617:

Go, go, my lambs, untended homeward fare,
My thoughts are all now due to other care.
Of Brutus, Dardan chief, my song shall be,
How with his barks he ploughed the British sea,
First from Rutupia's towering headland seen,
And of his consort's reign, fair Imogen;
Of Brennus and Belinus, brothers bold,
And of Arviragus, and how of old
Our hardy sires the Armorican controlled;
And of the wife of Gorlois, who, surprised
By Uther, in her husband's form disguised,
(Such was the force of Merlin's art) became
Pregnant with Arthur of heroic fame.

7. *P. L.* 1.13–16:

My adventrous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rime.

## B. THE FUNCTION OF THE EPIC.

1. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 3), *Works* 5.100:

Many civil virtues [must] be imported into our minds from foreign writings, and examples of best ages; we shall else miscarry still, and come short in the attempts of any great enterprise. Hence did their victories prove as fruitless as their losses dangerous, and left them still conquering under the same grievances that men suffer conquered; which was indeed unlikely to go otherwise unless men more than vulgar bred up, as few of them were, in the knowledge of ancient and illustrious deeds,...had conducted their affairs.[1]

2. *Church-Gov.* (*Bk.* 2), *Works* 3.146:

These abilities [of the epic poet] ... are of power...to inbreed and cherish in a great people the seeds of virtue and public civility.

3. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 6), *Works* 5.298:

Then the whole army singing the Song of Roland, the remembrance of whose exploits might hearten them, imploring lastly divine help, the battle began.

And see IV. C. 2, 3.

## C. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE EPIC.

1. *P. L.* 3.55:

Things invisible to mortal sight.

2. *P. R.* 1.14–17:

Deeds
Above heroic, though in secret done
And unrecorded left through many an age:
Worthy to have not remained so long unsung.

And see IV. B. 1, 2, 3; VIII. A. 2, 4.

## D. STRUCTURAL CONVENTIONS OF THE EPIC.

1. *2 Defence, Works* 6. 331:

Quemadmodum autem poeta is qui epicus vocatur, si quis paulo accuratior, minimeque abnormis est, quem heroem versibus canendum sibi proponit, ejus non vitam omnem, sed unam fere vitae actionem, Achillis puta ad Trojam, vel Ulyssis reditum, vel Aeneae in Italium adventum ornandum sibi sumit, reliquas praetermittit; ita mihi quoque vel ad officium, vel ad excusationem satis fuerit, unam saltem popularium meorum heroice rem gestam exornasse, reliqua praetereo; omnia universi populi praestare quis possit?

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[1] The passage probably suggests Milton's conception of the function of poetry, particularly of the national epic.

Translation by Fellows (6.446):

As the epic poet, who adheres at all to the rules of that species of composition, does not profess to describe the whole life of the hero whom he celebrates, but only some particular action of his life, as the resentment of Achilles at Troy, the return of Ulysses, or the coming of Aeneas into Italy; so it will be sufficient either for my justification or apology that I have heroically celebrated at least one exploit of my countrymen; I pass by the rest, for who could recite the achievements of a whole people?

2. *P. L.* 1, The Argument:

This First Book proposes, first in brief, the whole subject—Man's disobedience, and the loss thereupon of Paradise, wherein he was placed: then touches the prime cause of his fall—the Serpent, or rather Satan in the Serpent; who, revolting from God, and drawing to his side many legions of Angels, was, by the command of God, driven out of Heaven, with all his crew, into the great Deep. Which action passed over, the poem hastens into the midst of things; presenting Satan, with his Angels, now fallen into Hell.

Samson

3. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.143:

A poet soaring in the high region of his fancies, with his garland and singing-robes about him, might without apology speak more of himself than I mean to do.[1]

4. *P. L.* 9.5–6:

I now must change
Those notes to tragic.[2]

## IX. REFERENCES TO POETICAL TYPES OTHER THAN THE DRAMA AND THE EPIC

1. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.146:

Or, if occasion shall lead, to imitate those magnific odes and hymns wherein Pindarus and Callimachus are in most things worthy, some others in their frame judicious, in their matter most an end faulty. But those frequent songs throughout the Law and Prophets beyond all these, not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition, may be easily made appear over all the kinds of lyric poesy to be incomparable.

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[1] For instances in his epics where Milton speaks either as or of himself, see *P. L.* 3. 1 ff., 372 ff.; 9.1 ff.; *P. R.* 1.1 ff.

[2] This statement introduces one of the 'tragic episodes' in *Paradise Lost.*

2. *S. A.* 1733–1737:

There will I build him
A monument, and plant it round with shade
Of laurel ever green and branching palm,
With all his trophies hung, and acts enrolled
In copious legend, or sweet lyric song.

3. *P. R.* 4.250–260:

Within the walls then view
The schools of ancient sages—his who bred
Great Alexander to subdue the world,
Lyceum there; and painted Stoa next.
There thou shalt hear and learn the secret power
Of harmony, in tones and numbers hit
By voice or hand, and various-measured verse,
Aeolian charms and Dorian lyric odes,
And his who gave them breath, but higher sung,
Blind Melesigenes, thence Homer called,
Whose poem Phoebus challenged for his own.

4. *P. R.* 1.182:

So they in Heaven their odes and vigils tuned.

5. *Nativity* 22–28:

See how from far upon the eastern road
The star-led wizards haste with odors sweet!
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode,
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet;
Have thou the honor first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the angel quire,
From out His secret altar touched with hallowed fire.

6. *Lycidas* 186–189:

> Thus sang the uncouth swain to the oaks and rills,
> While the still morn went out with sandals grey:
> He touched the tender stops of various quills,
> With eager thought warbling his Doric lay.

And see X. 1, 2; XI. C. 1, 3.

## X. HEBREW POETRY

1. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.146:

Those frequent songs throughout the Law and Prophets,. . . not in their divine argument alone, but in the very critical art of composition, may be easily made appear, over all the kinds of lyric poesy, to be incomparable.

2. *P. R.* 4.333–352:

> Or, if I would delight my private hours
> With music or with poem, where so soon
> As in our native language can I find
> That solace? All our Law and Story strewed
> With hymns, our Psalms with artful terms inscribed,
> Our Hebrew songs and harps, in Babylon
> That pleased so well our victor's ear, declare
> That rather Greece from us these arts derived—
> Ill imitated while they loudest sing
> The vices of their deities, and their own,
> In fable, hymn, or song, so personating
> Their gods ridiculous, and themselves past shame.
> Remove their swelling epithets, thick-laid
> As varnish on a harlot's cheek, the rest,
> Thin-sown with aught of profit or delight,
> Will far be found unworthy to compare
> With Sion's songs, to all true tastes excelling,
> Where God is praised aright and godlike men,
> The Holiest of Holies and His saints
> (Such are from God inspired, not such from thee);
> Unless where moral virtue is expressed
> By light of Nature, not in all quite lost.

And see XI. C. 2 (line 85).

# XI. THE POET

## A. SOCRATES' EXPULSION OF THE POETS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF PLATO.

### 1. *Areopagitica, Works* 4.416–417:

Plato, a man of high authority indeed, but least of all for his Commonwealth, in the book of his laws, which no city ever yet received, fed his fancy with making many edicts to his airy burgomasters, which they who otherwise admire him, wish had been rather buried and excused in the genial cups of an academic night-sitting. By which laws he seems to tolerate no kind of learning, but by unalterable decree, consisting most of practical traditions, to the attainment whereof a library of smaller bulk than his own dialogues would be abundant. And there also enacts that no poet should so much as read to any private man what he had written, until the judges and law-keepers had seen it, and allowed it. But that Plato meant this law peculiarly to that Commonwealth which he had imagined and to no other, is evident. Why was he not else a lawgiver to himself, but a transgressor, and to be expelled by his own magistrates, both for the wanton epigrams and dialogues which he made, and his perpetual reading of Sophron Mimus and Aristophanes, books of grossest infamy, and also for commending the latter of them, though he were the malicious libeler of his chief friends, to be read by the Tyrant Dionysius, who had little need of such trash to spend his time on?[1] —but that he knew this licensing of poems had reference and dependence to many other provisos there set down in his fancied republic, which in this world could have no place; and so neither he himself nor any magistrate or city ever imitated that course, which taken apart from those other collateral injunctions must needs be vain and fruitless. For if they fell upon one kind of strictness, unless their care were equal to regulate all other things of like aptness to corrupt the mind, that single endeavor they knew would be but a fond labor—to shut and fortify one gate against corruption, and be necessitated to leave others round about wide open.

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[1] Cf. *Areopagitica, Works* 4.401: 'Neither is it recorded that the writings of those old comedians were suppressed, though the acting of them were forbid; and that Plato commended the reading of Aristophanes, the loosest of them all, to his royal scholar Dionysius is commonly known, and may be excused if holy Chrysostom, as is reported, nightly studied so much the same author, and had the art to cleanse a scurrilous vehemence into the style of a rousing sermon.'

2. *De Idea Platonica* 35–39:

At tu, perenne, ruris Academi decus
(Haec monstra[1] si tu primus induxti scholis),
Iam iam poetas, urbis exules tuae,
Revocabis, ipse fabulator maximus;
Aut institutor ipse migrabis foras.

Translation by Cowper, p. 604:

And thou, who hast immortalized the shades
Of Academus, if the schools received
This monster of the fancy first from thee,
Either recall at once the banished bards
To thy republic, or, thyself evinced
A wilder fabulist, go also forth.

## B. THE CHARACTER OF THE POET.

1. *An Apology, Works* 3.270–271:

If I found those authors ['the smooth elegiac poets,' cf. XI. C. 3] anywhere speaking unworthy things of themselves, or unchaste of those names which before they had extolled, this effect it wrought with me, from that time forward their art I still applauded, but the men I deplored; and above them all preferred the two famous renowners of Beatrice and Laura, who never write but honor of them to whom they devote their verse, displaying sublime and pure thoughts without transgression. And long it was not after when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem, that is, a composition and pattern of the best and honorablest things; not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men, or famous cities, unless he have in himself the experience and the practice of all that which is praiseworthy.

2. *Epist. Fam.* 21, *Works* 7.399:

Ego si id assequi possum, ut si qua commode scripsi, iis par animo ac moribus esse videar; et pondus ipse scriptis addidero, et laudem vicissim, quantulacunque ea est, eo tamen majorem ab ipsis retulero:

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[1] The Platonic idea of man as Milton says it was understood by Aristotle.

cum rectum et laudabile quod est, id non magnis ab authoribus praestantissimis accepisse, quam ab intimo sensu mentis atque animi depromsisse purum atque sincerum videbor.

### Translation by Fellowes (1.xxxi):

But as far as is possible I will endeavor to seem equal in thought and speech to what I have well written, if I have written anything well; and while I add to the dignity of what I have written, I will at the same time derive from my writings a greater splendor of reputation. Thus I shall not seem to have borrowed the excellence of my literary compositions from others so much as to have drawn it pure and unmingled from the resources of my own mind and the force of my own conceptions.

3. *Epist. Fam.* 2, *Works* 7.370–371:

Sciebam equidem quam tibi tuoque genio impossibile futurum esset, a rebus poeticis avocare animum, et furores illos coelitus instinctos, sacrumque et aethereum ignem intimo pectore eluere, cum tua (quod de seipso Claudianus) 'Totum spirent praecordia Phoebum.'

### Translation by Fellowes (1.ii):

I knew how impossible it would be for a person of your genius entirely to divert his mind from the culture of the Muses, and to extinguish those heavenly emotions, and that sacred and ethereal fire which is kindled in your heart. For what Claudian said of himself may be said of you; your 'whole soul is instinct with the fire of Apollo.'

## C. THE POET'S TRAINING AND MODE OF LIFE.

1. *Elegia* 6.13–78:

Quid quereris refugam vino dapibusque poesin?
Carmen amat Bacchum, carmina Bacchus amat.
Nec puduit Phoebum virides gestasse corymbos,
Atque hederam lauro praeposuisse suae.
Saepius Aoniis clamavit collibus 'Evoe'
Mista Thyoneo turba novena choro.
Naso Corallaeis mala carmina misit ab agris:
Non illic epulae, non sata vitis erat.
Quid nisi vina, rosasque, racemiferumque Lyaeum,

Cantavit brevibus Teia Musa modis?
Pindaricosque inflat numeros Teumesius Euan,
Et redolet sumptum pagina quaeque merum;
Dum gravis everso currus crepat axe supinus,
Et volat Eleo pulvere fuscus eques.
Quadrimoque madens Lyricen Romanus Iaccho
Dulce canit Glyceran, flavicomamque Chloen.
Iam quoque lauta tibi generoso mensa paratu
Mentis alit vires, ingeniumque fovet.
Massica foecundam despumant pocula venam,
Fundis et ex ipso condita metra cado.
Addimus his artes, fusumque per intima Phoebum
Corda; favent uni Bacchus, Apollo, Ceres.
Scilicet haud mirum tam dulcia carmina per te,
Numine composito, tres peperisse Deos.
Nunc quoque Thressa tibi caelato barbitos auro
Insonat arguta molliter icta manu:
Auditurque chelys suspensa tapetia circum,
Virgineos tremula quae regat arte pedes.
Illa tuas saltem teneant spectacula Musas,
Et revocent quantum crapula pellit iners.
Crede mihi, dum psallit ebur, comitataque plectrum
Implet odoratos festa chorea tholos,
Percipies tacitum per pectora serpere Phoebum,
Quale repentinus permeat ossa calor;
Perque puellares oculos digitumque sonantem
Irruet in totos lapsa Thalia sinus.
Namque Elegia levis multorum cura deorum est,
Et vocat ad numeros quemlibet illa suos;
Liber adest elegis, Eratoque, Ceresque, Venusque,
Et cum purpurea matre tenellus Amor.
Talibus inde licent convivia larga poetis,
Saepius et veteri commaduisse mero.
At qui bella refert, et adulto sub Iove caelum,
Heroasque pios, semideosque duces,
Et nunc sancta canit superum consulta deorum,
Nunc latrata fero regna profunda cane,
Ille quidem parce, Samii pro more magistri,

Vivat, et innocuos praebeat herba cibos;
Stet prope fagineo pellucida lympha catillo,
Sobriaque e puro pocula fonte bibat.
Additur huic scelerisque vacans et casta iuventus,
Et rigidi mores, et sine labe manus:
Qualis veste nitens sacra, et lustralibus undis,
Surgis ad infensos augur iture deos.
Hoc ritu vixisse ferunt post rapta sagacem
Lumina Tiresian, Ogygiumque Linon,
Et lare devoto profugum Calchanta, senemque
Orpheon edomitis sola per antra feris;
Sic dapis exiguus, sic rivi potor Homerus
Dulichium vexit per freta longa virum,
Et per monstrificam Perseiae Phoebados aulam,
Et vada foemineis insidiosa sonis,
Perque tuas, rex ime, domos, ubi sanguine nigro
Dicitur umbrarum detinuisse greges:
Diis etenim sacer est vates, divumque sacerdos,
Spirat et occultum pectus et ora Iovem.

Translation by Cowper, p. 593–595:

Think not that wine against good verse offends;
The Muse and Bacchus have been always friends,
Nor Phoebus blushes sometimes to be found
With ivy, rather than with laurel, crowned.
The Nine themselves ofttimes have joined the song
And revels of the Bacchanalian throng;
Not even Ovid could in Scythian air
Sing sweetly. Why? No wine would flourish there.
What in brief numbers sung Anacreon's Muse?
Wine, and the rose, that sparkling wine bedews.
Pindar with Bacchus glows—his every line
Breathes the rich fragrance of inspiring wine,
While, with loud crash o'erturned, the chariot lies
And brown with dust the fiery courser flies.
The Roman lyrist steeped in wine his lays
So sweet in Glycera's and Cloe's praise.

Now too the plenteous feast and mantling bowl
Nourish the vigor of thy sprightly soul;
The flowing goblet makes thy numbers flow,
And casks not wine alone, but verse, bestow.
Thus Phoebus favors, and the arts attend,
Whom Bacchus, and whom Ceres, both befriend.
What wonder then, thy verses are so sweet,
In which these triple powers so kindly meet.
The lute now also sounds, with gold-inwrought,
And, touched with flying fingers nicely taught,
In tapestried hall, high-roofed, the sprightly lyre
Directs the dancers of the virgin quire.
If dull repletion fright the Muse away
Sights, gay as these, may more invite her stay;
And, trust me, while the ivory keys resound,
Fair damsels sport, and perfumes steam around,
Apollo's influence, like ethereal flame,
Shall animate, at once, thy glowing frame,
And all the Muse shall rush into thy breast,
By love and music's blended powers possessed.
For numerous powers light Elegy befriend,
Hear her sweet voice, and at her call attend;
Her, Bacchus, Ceres, Venus, all approve,
And, with his blushing mother, gentle Love.
Hence to such bards we grant the copious use
Of banquets, and the vine's delicious juice.
But they who demigods and heroes praise,
And feats performed in Jove's more youthful days,
Who now the counsels of high heaven explore,
Now shades that echo the Cerberean roar,
Simply let these like him of Samos live,
Let herbs to them a bloodless banquet give;
In beechen goblets let their beverage shine,
Cool from the crystal spring, their sober wine!
Their youth should pass, in innocence secure
From stain licentious, and in manners pure,
Pure as the priest, when robed in white he stands,
The fresh lustration ready in his hands.

Thus Linus lived, and thus, as poets write,
Tiresias, wiser for his loss of sight!
Thus exiled Calchas, thus the bard of Thrace,
Melodious tamer of the savage race!
Thus, trained by temperance, Homer led of yore
His chief of Ithaca from shore to shore,
Through magic Circe's monster-peopled reign,
And shoals insidious with the Siren train;
And through the realms, where grizzly spectres dwell,
Whose tribes he fettered in a gory spell;
For these are sacred bards, and, from above,
Drink large infusions from the mind of Jove!

2. *Ad Patrem* 67–110:

Tu tamen ut simules teneras odisse Camoenas,
Non odisse reor. Neque enim, pater, ire iubebas
Qua via lata patet, qua pronior area lucri,
Certaque condendi fulget spes aurea nummi;
Nec rapis ad leges, male custoditaque gentis
Iura, nec insulsis damnas clamoribus aures.
Sed, magis excultam cupiens ditescere mentem,
Me, procul urbano strepitu, secessibus altis
Abductum, Aoniae iucunda per otia ripae,
Phoebaeo lateri comitem sinis ire beatum.
Officium chari taceo commune parentis;
Me poscunt maiora. Tuo, pater optime, sumptu
Cum mihi Romuleae patuit facundia linguae,
Et Latii veneres, et quae Iovis ora decebant
Grandia magniloquis elata vocabula Graiis,
Addere suasisti quos iactat Gallia flores,
Et quam degeneri novus Italus ore loquelam
Fundit, barbaricos testatus voce tumultus,
Quaeque Palaestinus loquitur mysteria vates.
Denique quicquid habet caelum, subiectaque caelo
Terra parens, terraeque et caelo interfluus aer,
Quicquid et unda tegit, pontique agitabile marmor,
Per te nosse licet, per te, si nosse libebit;
Dimotaque venit spectanda Scientia nube,

Nudaque conspicuos inclinat ad oscula vultus,
Ni fugisse velim, ni sit libasse molestum.
  I nunc, confer opes, quisquis malesanus avitas
Austriaci gazas Perüanaque regna praeoptas.
Quae potuit maiora pater tribuisse, vel ipse
Iupiter, excepto, donasset ut omnia, caelo?
Non potiora dedit, quamvis et tuta fuissent,
Publica qui iuveni commisit lumina nato,
Atque Hyperionios currus, et fraena diei,
Et circum undantem radiata luce tiaram.
Ergo ego, iam doctae pars quamlibet ima catervae,
Victrices hederas inter laurosque sedebo;
Iamque nec obscurus populo miscebor inerti,
Vitabuntque oculos vestigia nostra profanos.
Este procul vigiles Curae, procul este Querelae,
Invidiaeque acies transverso tortilis hirquo;
Saeva nec anguiferos extende, Calumnia, rictus;
In me triste nihil, foedissima turba, potestis,
Nec vestri sum iuris ego; securaque tutus
Pectora vipereo gradiar sublimis ab ictu.

Translation by Cowper, p. 606–607:

  No! howsoe'er the semblance thou assume
Of hate, thou hatest not the gentle Muse,
My Father! For thou never bad'st me tread
The beaten path, and broad, that leads right on
To opulence, nor did'st condemn thy son
To the insipid clamors of the bar,
To laws voluminous, and ill-observed;
But, wishing to enrich me more, to fill
My mind with treasure, ledst me far away
From city-din to deep retreats, to banks
And streams Aonian, and, with free consent,
Didst place me happy at Apollo's side.
I speak not now, on more important themes
Intent, of common benefits, and such
As nature bids, but of thy larger gifts,
My Father! who, when I had opened once

The stores of Roman rhetoric, and learned
The full-toned language of the eloquent Greeks,
Whose lofty music graced the lips of Jove,
Thyself didst counsel me to add the flowers
That Gallia boasts, those too with which the smooth
Italian his degenerate speech adorns,
That witnesses his mixture with the Goth;
And Palestine's prophetic songs divine.
To sum the whole, whate'er the heaven contains,
The earth beneath it, and the air between,
The rivers and the restless deep, may all
Prove intellectual gain to me, my wish
Concurring with thy will; Science herself
All cloud removed, inclines her beauteous head,
And offers me the lip, if dull of heart
I shrink not, and decline her gracious boon.
   Go now and gather dross, ye sordid minds
That covet it; what could my Father more?
What more could Jove himself, unless he gave
His own abode, the heaven, in which he reigns?
More eligible gifts than these were not
Apollo's to his son, had they been safe
As they were insecure, who made the boy
The world's vice-luminary, bade him rule
The radiant chariot of the day, and bind
To his young brows his own all-dazzling wreath.
I, therefore, although last and least, my place
Among the learned in the laurel grove
Will hold, and where the conqueror's ivy twines,
Henceforth exempt from the unlettered throng
Profane, nor even to be seen by such.
Away, then, sleepless Care, Complaint away,
And Envy, with thy 'jealous leer malign'!
Nor let the monster Calumny shoot forth
Her venomed tongue at me. Detested foes!
Ye all are impotent against my peace,
For I am privileged, and bear my breast
Safe, and too high, for your viperean wound.

3. *An Apology, Works* 3.269–270:

I had my time, Readers, as others have who have good learning bestowed upon them, to be sent to those places where the opinion was it might be soonest attained; and, as the manner is, was not unstudied in those authors which are most commended; whereof some were grave orators and historians, whose matter me thought I loved indeed, but as my age then was, so I understood them; others were the smooth elegiac poets whereof the schools are not scarce, whom both for the pleasing sound of their numerous writing, which in imitation I found most easy and most agreeable to nature's part in me, and for their matter, which what it is there be few who know not, I was so allured to read that no recreation came to me better welcome. For that it was then those years with me which are excused though they be least severe, I may be saved the labor to remember ye. Whence having observed them to account it the chief glory of their wit in that they were ablest to judge, to praise, and by that could esteem themselves worthiest to love, those high perfections which under one or other name they took to celebrate, I thought with myself by every instinct and presage of nature, which is not wont to be false, that what emboldened them to this task might with such diligence as they used embolden me, and that what judgment, wit, or elegance was my share would herein best appear, and best value itself, by how much more wisely, and with more love of virtue I should choose (let rude ears be absent) the object of not unlike praises.

4. *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.456–457:

Nullum unquam sensi gravius impedimentum et moram hoc frequenti interpellationis damno; nihil vero magis aluisse ingenium, et, contra quam in corpore sit, bonam ei valetudinem conservasse erudito et liberali otio. Hunc ego divinum Hesiodi somnum, hos nocturnos Endymionis cum Luna congressus esse crediderim; hunc illum duce Mercurio Promethei secessum in altissimas Montis Caucasi solitudines ubi sapientissimus deum atque hominum evasit, utpote quem ipse Jupiter de nuptiis Thetidis consultem isse dicatur. Testor ipse lucos, et flumina, et dilectas villarum ulmos, sub quibus aestate proxime praeterita (si dearum arcana eloqui liceat), summam cum Musis gratiam habuisse me jucunda memoria recolo; ubi et ego inter rura et semotos saltus velut occulto aevo crescere mihi potuisse visus sum.

Translation by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.297–298:

I have never experienced any hindrance and delay more grievous than this frequent mischief of interruption, and nothing more nutritive to my genius and conservative of its good health, as contradistinguished from that of the body, than a learned and liberal leisure. This I would fain believe to be the divine sleep of Hesiod; these to be Endymion's nightly meetings with the Moon; this to be that retirement of Prometheus, under the guidance of Mercury, to the steepest solitudes of Mount Caucasus, where he became the wisest of gods and men, so that even Jupiter himself is said to have gone to consult him about the marriage of Thetis. I call to witness for myself the groves and rivers and the beloved village-elms under which in the last past summer (if it is right to speak the secrets of goddesses), I remember with such pleasure the supreme delight I had with the Muses; where I too, amid rural scenes, and sequestered glades, seemed as if I could have vegetated through a hidden eternity.

5. *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.467:

Si nullum a pueritia diem sine praeceptis et diligenti studio vacuum ire sinamus, si in arte, aliena supervacanea otiosa sapienter omittamus, certe intra aetatem Alexandri magni majus quiddam et gloriosius illo terrarum orbe subegerimus: tantumque aberit quo minus brevitatem vitae, aut artis taedium incusemus, ut flere et lachrymari promptius nobis futurum credam, ut illi olim, non plures superesse mundos de quibus triumphemus.

Translation by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.302:

If from boyhood we allow no day to pass without its lessons and diligent study, if in art we wisely omit what is foreign, superfluous, useless, then certainly within the age of Alexander the Great we shall have made a greater and more glorious conquest than that of the globe, and so far shall we be from accusing the brevity of life or the fatigue of knowledge, that I believe we shall be readier, like him of old, to weep and sob that there remain no more worlds for us to conquer.

6. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.144–145:

I began thus far to assent both to them [the members of the Italian academies] and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting which now grew daily upon me, that by labor and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life), joined with the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after times as they should not willingly let it die. . . . I applied myself . . . to fix all the industry and art I could unite to the adornment of my native tongue; not to make verbal curiosities the end—that were a toilsome vanity—but to be an interpreter and relater of the best and sagest things among mine own citizens throughout this island in the mother dialect.

7. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.148–149:

The thing which I had to say, and those intentions which have lived within me ever since I could conceive myself anything worth to my country, I return to crave excuse that urgent reason hath plucked from me by an abortive and foredated discovery. And the accomplishment of them lies not but in a power above man's to promise; but that none hath by more studious ways endeavored, and with more unwearied spirit that none shall, that I dare almost aver of myself, as far as life and free leisure will extend, and that the land had once enfranschised herself from this impertinent yoke of prelaty, under whose inquisitorious and tyrannical duncery no free and splendid wit can flourish. Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader that for some few years yet I may go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapors of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amorist or the trencher-fury of a riming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren daughters; but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases. To this must be added industrious and select reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs, till which in some measure be compassed, at mine own peril and cost I refuse not to sustain this expectation from as many as are not loath to hazard so much credulity upon the best pledges that I can give them.

And see XI. D. i. 2.

## D. ELEMENTS IN POETIC INVENTION.

### i. ART AND NATIVE ENDOWMENT

1. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.145–146:

If to the instinct of nature and the emboldening of art aught may be trusted, and that there be nothing adverse in our climate or the fate of this age, it haply would be no rashness from an equal diligence and inclination to present the like offer[1] in our own ancient stories.

2. *An Apology, Works* 3.292:

For this good hap I had from a careful education to be inured and seasoned betimes with the best and elegantest authors of the learned tongues, and thereto brought an ear that could measure a just cadence, and scan without articulating.

And see IV. B. 3; C. 2; F. 2; XI. B. 3; C. 3, 6; F. 3.

### ii. POETIC SPONTANEITY

1. *P. L.* 3.37–38:

Then feed on thoughts that voluntary move
Harmonious numbers.

2. *P. L.* 9.20–24:

If answerable style I can obtain
Of my celestial patroness, who deigns
Her nightly visitation unimplored,
And dictates to me slumbering, or inspires
Easy my unpremeditated verse.

3. *P. L.* 5.144–152:

Lowly they bowed, adoring, and began
Their orisons, each morning duly paid
In various style; for neither various style
Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise
Their Maker, in fit strains pronounced, or sung

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[1] The reference is to Tasso's offer to a 'prince of Italy' to write upon some one of various heroic subjects.

Unmeditated; such prompt eloquence
Flowed from their lips, in prose or numerous verse,
More tunable than needed lute or harp
To add more sweetness.

4. *On Shakespeare* 9–10:

For whilst to th' shame of slow-endeavoring art,
Thy easy numbers flow.

And see XI. F. 1.

## E. THE POET'S APPEAL FOR INSPIRATION.

1. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.148–149:

Neither do I think it shame to covenant with any knowing reader that for some few years yet I many go on trust with him toward the payment of what I am now indebted, as being a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapors of wine,...nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her Siren daughters; but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases.

2. *P. L.* 1.1–26:

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
Brought death into the World, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing, Heavenly Muse, that, on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed
In the beginning how the heavens and earth
Rose out of Chaos: or, if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventrous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues

Things unattempted yet in prose or rime.
And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou know'st; Thou from the first
Wast present, and, with mighty wings outspread,
Dove-like sat'st brooding on the vast Abyss,
And mad'st it pregnant. What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That, to the height of this great argument,
I may assert Eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

3. *P. L.* 7.1–39:

Descend from Heaven, Urania, by that name
If rightly thou art called, whose voice divine
Following, above the Olympian hill I soar,
Above the flight of Pegasean wing!
The meaning not the name, I call; for thou
Nor of the Muses nine, nor on the top
Of old Olympus dwell'st; but, heavenly-born,
Before the hills appeared or fountain flowed,
Thou with Eternal Wisdom didst converse,
Wisdom thy sister, and with her didst play
In presence of the Almighty Father, pleased
With thy celestial song. Up led by thee,
Into the Heaven of Heavens I have presumed,
An earthly guest, and drawn empyreal air,
Thy tempering. With like safety guided down,
Return me to my native element;
Lest, from this flying steed unreined (as once
Bellerophon, though from a lower clime)
Dismounted, on the Aleian field I fall,
Erroneous there to wander and forlorn.
Half yet remains unsung, but narrower bound
Within the visible, diurnal sphere.
Standing on Earth, not rapt above the pole,
More safe I sing with mortal voice, unchanged
To hoarse or mute, though fallen on evil days,

On evil days though fallen, and evil tongues;
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round,
And solitude; yet not alone, while thou
Visit'st my slumbers nightly, or when morn
Purples the East. Still govern thou my song,
Urania, and fit audience find, though few.
But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
Of Bacchus and his revelers, the race
Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears
To rapture, till the savage clamor drowned
Both harp and voice; nor could the Muse defend
Her son. So fail not thou who thee implores;
For thou art heavenly, she an empty dream.

4. *P. L.* 9.20–21:

If answerable style I can obtain
From my celestial patroness.

5. *P. R.* 1.8–12:

Thou Spirit, who led'st this glorious Eremite
Into the desert, his victorious field
Against the spiritual foe, and brought'st him thence
By proof the undoubted Son of God, inspire,
As thou art wont, my prompted song, else mute.

## F. THE SENSITIVENESS OF THE POET TO CLIMATE AND SEASON.

1. *Elegia* 5.1–30:

In se perpetuo Tempus revolubile gyro
Iam revocat Zephyros, vere tepente, novos;
Induiturque brevem Tellus reparata iuventam,
Iamque soluta gelu dulce virescit humus.
Fallor? an et nobis redeunt in carmina vires,
Ingeniumque mihi munere veris adest?
Munere veris adest, iterumque vigescit ab illo
(Quis putet?) atque aliquod iam sibi poscit opus.

Castalis ante oculos, bifidumque cacumen oberrat,
Et mihi Pyrenen somnia nocte ferunt;
Concitaque arcano fervent mihi pectora motu,
Et furor, et sonitus me sacer intus agit.
Delius ipse venit (video Peneide lauro
Implicitos crines), Delius ipse venit.
Iam mihi mens liquidi raptatur in ardua caeli,
Perque vagas nubes corpore liber eo;
Perque umbras, perque antra feror, penetralia vatum:
Et mihi fana patent interiora Deum;
Intuiturque animus toto quid agatur Olympo,
Nec fugiunt oculos Tartara caeca meos.
Quid tam grande sonat distento spiritus ore?
Quid parit haec rabies, quid sacer iste furor?
Ver mihi, quod dedit ingenium, cantabitur illo;
Profuerint isto reddita dona modo.
Iam, Philomela, tuos, foliis adoperta novellis,
Instituis modulos, dum silet omne nemus:
Urbe ego, tu silva, simul incipiamus utrique.
Et simul adventum veris uterque canat.
Veris, io! rediere vices; celebremus honores
Veris, et hoc subeat Musa perennis opus.

Translation by Cowper, pp. 590–591:

Time, never wandering from his annual round,
Bids Zephyr breathe the spring, and thaw the ground;
Bleak winter flies, new verdure clothes the plain,
And earth assumes her transient youth again.
Dream I, or also to the spring belong
Increase of genius, and new powers of song?
Spring gives them, and, how strange soe'er it seems,
Impels me now to some harmonious themes.
Castalia's fountain, and the forkèd hill
By day, by night, my raptured fancy fill,
My bosom burns and heaves; I hear within
A sacred sound that prompts me to begin.
Lo! Phoebus comes, with his bright hair he blends
The radiant laurel wreath; Phoebus descends;

I mount, and, undepressed by cumbrous clay,
Through cloudy regions win my easy way;
Rapt through poetic shadowy haunts I fly:
The shrines all open to my dauntless eye,
My spirit searches all the realms of light,
And no Tartarean gulfs elude my sight.
But this ecstatic trance—this glorious storm
Of inspiration—what will it perform?
Spring claims the verse that with his influence glows,
And shall be paid with what himself bestows.
Thou, veiled with opening foliage, leadst the throng
Of feathered minstrels, Philomel! in song;
Let us, in concert, to the season sing,
Civic and sylvan heralds of the spring!
With notes triumphant spring's approach declare!
To spring, ye Muses, annual tribute bear!

2. *Mansus* 24–38:

Ergo ego te, Clius et magni nomine Phoebi,
Manse pater, iubeo longum salvere per aevum,
Missus Hyperboreo iuvenis peregrinus ab axe.
Nec tu longinquam bonus aspernabere Musam,
Quae nuper, gelida vix enutrita sub Arcto,
Imprudens Italas ausa est volitare per urbes.
Nos etiam in nostro modulantes flumine cygnos
Credimus obscuras noctis sensisse per umbras,
Qua Thamesis late puris argenteus urnis
Oceani glaucos perfundit gurgite crines;
Quin et in has quondam pervenit Tityrus oras.
   Sed neque nos genus incultum, nec inutile Phoebo,
Qua plaga septeno mundi sulcata Trione
Brumalem patitur longa sub nocte Boöten.
Nos etiam colimus Phoebum.

Translation by Cowper, p. 610:

I, therefore, though a stranger-youth, who come
Chilled by rude blasts that freeze my Northern home,
Thee dear to Clio, confident proclaim,

And thine, for Phoebus' sake, a deathless name.
Nor thou, so kind, wilt view with scornful eye
A Muse scarce reared beneath our sullen sky,
Who fears not, indiscreet as she is young,
To seek in Latium hearers of her song.
We too, where Thames with his unsullied waves
The tresses of the blue-haired Ocean laves,
Hear oft by night, or, slumbering, seem to hear,
O'er his wide stream, the swan's voice warbling clear,
And we could boast a Tityrus of yore,
Who trod, a welcome guest, our happy shore.
  Yes—dreary as we own our Northern clime,
Even we to Phoebus raise the polished rime,
We too serve Phoebus.

3. *Areopagitica, Works* 4.398:

But if from the industry of a life wholly dedicated to studious labors, and those natural endowments haply not the worst for two-and-fifty degrees of northern latitude, so much must be derogated as to count me not equal to any of those who had this privilege,[1] I would obtain to be thought not so inferior as yourselves are superior to the most of them who received their counsel.

And see VIII. A. 1, 2 (lines 44–46); XI. D. i. 1.

## G. THE MEDIOCRE POET.

1. *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.456:

Nam quoniam ex libris et sententiis doctissimorum hominum sic accepi, nihil vulgare aut mediocre in oratore, ut nec in poeta posse concedi.

Translation by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.297:

I have learned from the books and from the deliverances of the most learned men, that, no more in the orator than in the poet can anything common or mediocre be tolerated.

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[1] The privilege of admonishing the State accorded in ancient days to those who 'possessed the study of wisdom and eloquence.'

### H. The Bad Poet.

1. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.147:

And what a benefit this[1] would be to our youth and gentry may be soon guessed by what we know of the corruption and bane which they suck in daily from the writings and interludes of libidinous and ignorant poetasters, who, having scarce ever heard of that which is the main consistence of a true poem, the choice of such persons as they ought to introduce, and what is moral and decent to each one, do for the most part lap up vicious principles in sweet pills to be swallowed down, and make the taste of virtuous documents harsh and sour.

2. *1 Defence* (chap. 10), *Works* 6.165:

Videri se bonos, intrepidos, innocentes, interdum et sanctos pessimi quique non minus in morte quam in vita cupiunt;...et veluti poetae aut histriones deterrimi, plausum in ipso exitu ambitiosissime captare.

Translation, *Works* 8.222:

Sometimes the worst of men desire to appear good, undaunted, innocent, and now and then religious, not only in their life but at their death;...and like bad poets or stage-players are very ambitious of being clapped at the end of the play.

3. *Eikonoclastes* (15), *Works* 3.454:

Poets, indeed, used to vapor much after this manner. But to bad kings who without cause expect future glory from their actions, it happens as to bad poets, who sit and starve themselves with a delusive hope to win immortality by their bad lines.

## XII. THE ATTITUDE OF THE ARTIST AND THE SCHOLAR TOWARD FAME

1. *Epist. Fam. 7*, *Works* 7.378:

Quid cogitem quaeris; ita me, bonus Deus, immortalitatem. Quid agam vero? Πτεροφυῶ, et volare meditor: sed tenellis admodum adhuc pennis evehit se noster Pegasus, humile sapiamus.

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[1] The sentence immediately preceding this excerpt is that given under IV. C. 3.

Translation by Fellowes (1.x):

Do you ask what I am meditating? By the help of heaven, an immortality of fame. But what am I doing? Πτεροφυῶ. I am letting my wings grow and preparing to fly; but my Pegasus has not yet feathers enough to soar aloft in the fields of air.

2. *Lycidas* 64–84:

Alas! what boots it with incessant care
To tend the homely, slighted, shepherd's trade,
And strictly meditate the thankless Muse?
Were it not better done, as others use,
To sport with Amaryllis in the shade,
Or with the tangles of Neaera's hair?
Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
(That last infirmity of noble mind)
To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
Comes the blind Fury with the abhorrèd shears,
And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise,'
Phoebus replied, and touched my trembling ears:
'Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,
Nor in the glistering foil
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumor lies,
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes,
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove:
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,
Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed.'

3. *P. R.* 3.47–64:

For what is glory but the blaze of fame,
The people's praise, if always praise unmixed?
And what the people but a herd confused,
A miscellaneous rabble, who extol
Things vulgar, and, well weighed, scarce worth the praise?
They praise and they admire they know not what,
And know not whom, but as one leads the other;

And what delight to be by such extolled,
To live upon their tongues, and be their talk?
Of whom to be dispraised were no small praise—
His lot who dares be singularly good.
The intelligent among them and the wise
Are few, and glory scarce of few is raised.
This is true glory and renown—when God,
Looking on the Earth, with approbation marks
The just man, and divulges him through Heaven
To all His Angels, who with true applause
Recount his praises.

4. *P. L.* 3.440–454:

So, on this windy sea of land, the Fiend
Walked up and down alone, bent on his prey:
Alone, for other creature in this place,
Living or lifeless, to be found was none—
None yet; but store hereafter from the Earth
Up hither like aerial vapors flew
Of all things transitory and vain, when sin
With vanity had filled the works of men—
Both all things vain, and all who in vain things
Built their fond hopes of glory or lasting fame,
Or happiness in this or the other life.
All who have their reward on earth, the fruits
Of painful superstition and blind zeal,
Naught seeking but the praise of men, here find
Fit retribution, empty as their deeds.

5. *Areopagitica, Works* 4.422–423:

Not the mercenary crew of false pretenders to learning, but the free and ingenuous sort of such as evidently were born to study, and love learning for itself, not for lucre, or any other end but the service of God and of truth, and perhaps that lasting fame and perpetuity of praise which God and good men have consented shall be the reward of those whose published labors advance the good of mankind.

### 6. Letter to a Friend, [Cambridge M.S.] Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.324:

There is another act[1] if not of pure, yet of refined nature, no less available to dissuade prolonged obscurity—a desire of honor and repute and immortal fame, seated in the breast of every true scholar.

### 7. *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.467-468:

At vero non morari gloriam cum bene feceris, id supra omnem gloriam est. Quam nihil beavit istos inanis hominum sermo cujus ad absentes et mortuos nulla voluptas, nullus sensus pervenire potuit? Nos sempiternum aevum expectemus quod nostrorum in terris saltem benefactorum memoriam nunquam delebit; in quo, si quid hic pulchre meruimus, praesentes ipsi audiemus, in quo qui prius in hac vita continentissime acta omne tempus bonis artibus dederint, iisque homines adjuverint, eos singulari et summa supra omnes scientia auctos esse futuros multi graviter philosophati sunt.

### Translation by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.302:

The very habit of not hankering after glory when one has done well is itself above all glory. What a nothing has been the happiness conferred on those very heroes of the past by the empty speech of men, since no pleasure from it, no sense of it at all, could reach the absent and the dead! Let us expect an eternal life in which at least the memory of our good deeds on earth shall never perish; in which, if we have done anything fairly here, we shall be present ourselves to hear of it; in which, as many have seriously speculated, those who have formerly in a virtuously spent life on earth given all their time to good acts, and by them been helpful to the human race, shall be aggrandized with singular and supreme science above all the rest of the immortals.

### 8. *Eikonoclastes,* (Preface), *Works* 3.329:

Neither was it fond ambition, or the vanity to get a name, present, or with posterity, by writing against a king: I never was so thirsty after fame nor so destitute of other hopes and means better and more certain to attain it.

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[1] Milton has been speaking of the student's various temptations to break from his quiet life.

9. *Epist. Fam.* 28, *Works* 7.407:

Sic . . . existimo, me tantundem duntaxat habere famae, quantum habeo bonae existimationis apud bonos.

Translation by Fellowes (1.xxxix):

I think that I can be famous only in proportion as I enjoy the approbation of the good.

10. *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.463:

Multarum gentium oraculum esse, domum quasi templum habere, esse quos reges et respublicae ad se invitent, cujus visendi gratia finitimique exterique concurrant, quem alii vel semel vidisse quasi quoddam bene meritum glorientur; haec studiorum praemia, hos fructus eruditio suis cultoribus in privata vita praestare, et potest, et saepe solet. At quid in publica? Sane ad majestatis fastigium paucos evexit laus doctrinae, nec probitatis multo plures. Nimirum, illi apud se regno fruuntur, omni terrarum ditione longe gloriosiori; et quis sine ambitionis, infamia geminum affectat regnum?

Translation by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.301:

To be the oracle of many nations, to have one's house a kind of temple; to be such as kings and commonwealths invite to come to them, such as neighbors and foreigners flock to visit, such as to have even once seen shall be boasted of by others as something meritorious; these are the rewards, these the fruits, which learning both can and often does secure for her votaries in private life. But what in public life? It is true the reputation of learning has elevated few, nor has the reputation of goodness elevated many more, to the summit of actual majesty. And no wonder. Those men enjoy a kingdom in themselves far more glorious than all dominion over realms; and who, without incurring the obloquy of ambition, affects a double sovereignty?

11. *Damon.* 168–178:

O, mihi tum si vita supersit,
Tu procul annosa pendebis, fistula, pinu
Multum oblita mihi, aut patriis mutata Camoenis
Brittonicum strides! Quid enim? omnia non licet uni,
Non sperasse uni licet omnia; mi satis ampla
Merces, et mihi grande decus (sim ignotus in aevum
Tum licet, externo penitusque inglorius orbi),

Si me flava comas legat Usa, et potor Alauni,
Vorticibusque frequens Abra, et nemus omne Treantae,
Et Thamesis meus ante omnes, et fusca metallis
Tamara, et extremis me discant Orcades undis.

Translation by Cowper, p. 617:

And oh, if Fate
Proportion to these themes my lengthened date,
Adieu my shepherd's reed. Yon pine-tree bough
Shall be thy future home; there dangle thou
Forgotten and disused, unless ere long
Thou change thy Latin for a British song.
A British?—even so—the powers of man
Are bounded; little is the most he can.
And it shall well suffice me, and shall be
Fame and proud recompense enough for me,
If Usa, golden-haired, my verse may learn,
If Alain bending o'er his crystal urn,
Swift-whirling Abra, Trent's o'ershadowed stream,
Thames, lovelier far than all in my esteem,
Tamar's ore-tinctured flood, and, after these,
The wave-worn shores of utmost Orcades.

12. *Arcades* 41:

What shallow-searching fame hath left untold.

And see XI. H. 2, 3.

## XIII. THE ARTIST, THE SCHOLAR, AND MATERIAL REWARD

1. *Animadversions, Works* 3.234:

Certainly never any clear spirit nursed up from brighter influences with a soul enlarged to the dimensions of spacious art and high knowledge ever entered there [the den of Plutus or the cave of Mammon] but with scorn, and thought it ever foul disdain to make pelf or ambition the reward of his studies, it being the greatest honor, the greatest fruit and proficiency, of learned studies to despise these things.

And see III. A. 4; XII. 5

## XIV. THE ARTIST AND THE PUBLIC

1. *P. L.* 7.30–38:

Still govern thou my song,
Urania, and fit audience find, though few.
But drive far off the barbarous dissonance
Of Bacchus and his revelers, the race
Of that wild rout that tore the Thracian bard
In Rhodope, where woods and rocks had ears
To rapture, till the savage clamor drowned
Both harp and voice; nor could the Muse defend
Her son.

2. *Ad Patrem* 101–104:

Ergo ego, iam doctae pars quamlibet ima catervae,
Victrices hederas inter laurosque sedebo;
Iamque nec obscurus populo miscebor inerti,
Vitabuntque oculos vestigia nostra profanos.

Translation by Cowper, p. 607:

I, therefore, although last and least, my place
Among the learned in the laurel grove
Will hold, and where the conqueror's ivy twines,
Henceforth exempt from the unlettered throng
Profane, nor even to be seen by such.

3. *Ad Rousium.* 73–87:

Vos tandem haud vacui mei labores,
Quicquid hoc sterile fudit ingenium,
Iam sero placidam sperare iubeo
Perfunctam invidia requiem, sedesque beatas
Quas bonus Hermes
Et tutela dabit solers Rousi,
Quo neque lingua procax vulgi penetrabit, atque longe
Turba legentum prava facesset;
At ultimi nepotes,
Et cordatior aetas
Iudicia rebus aequiora forsitan

Adhibebit integro sinu.
Tum livore sepulto,
Si quid meremur sana posteritas sciet
Rousio favente.

Translation by Cowper, p. 621:

Ye, then, my works, no longer vain
And worthless deemed by me!
Whate'er this sterile genius has produced,
Expect, at last, the rage of envy spent,
An unmolested happy home,
Gift of kind Hermes and my watchful friend,
Where never flippant tongue profane
Shall entrance find,
And whence the coarse unlettered multitude
Shall babble far remote.
Perhaps some future distant age,
Less tinged with prejudice, and better taught,
Shall furnish minds of power
To judge more equally.
Then, malice silenced in the tomb,
Cooler heads and sounder hearts,
Thanks to Rouse, if aught of praise
I merit, shall with candor weigh the claim.

And see XII. 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10.

## XV. DISDAIN OF POPULAR OPINION

1. *Epist. Fam.* 7, *Works* 7.377:

Unde sit,[1] ut qui spretis quae vulgus prava rerum aestimatione opinatur, id sentire et loqui et esse audet, quod summa per omne aevum sapientia optimum esse docuit, illi me protinus, sicubi reperiam, necessitate quadam adjungam.

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[1] Milton just has spoken of pursuing the idea of excellence like some beautiful image through all the forms and appearances of things.

Translation by Fellowes (1.ix):

Hence I feel an irresistible impluse to cultivate the friendship of him who, despising the prejudiced and false conceptions of the vulgar, dares to think, to speak, and to be, that which the highest wisdom has in every age taught to be the best.

2. *2 Defence, Works* 6.280:

Primum de illius eruditione, erat hominum summa opinio, quam multis ab annis jam diu collegerat,[1] libros conscribendo multos, et bene magnos, non eos quidem plerumque utiles, sed abstrusissimis de rebus, et summorum authorum citatiunculis differtos; quo nihil citius literatorum vulgus in admirationem rapit.

Translation by Fellowes (6.394):

Men in general entertained the highest opinion of his erudition, the celebrity of which he had been accumulating for many years by many voluminous and massy publications, not indeed of any practical utility, but relating to the most abstruse discussions, and crammed with quotations from the most illustrious authors. Nothing is so apt as this to excite the astonishment of the literary vulgar.

3. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.142–143:

I would be heard only, if it might be, by the elegant and learned reader, to whom principally for a while I shall beg leave I may address myself.[2]

4. *Eikonoclastes* (8), *Works* 3.392:

As there is some use of everything, so is there of this book, were it but to show us what a miserable, credulous, deluded thing that creature is which is called the vulgar.

5. *Civil Power, Works* 5.336:

Pomp and ostentation of reading is admired among the vulgar.

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[1] The reference is to Salmasius.

[2] Milton is explaining his motives in undertaking to write *The Reason of Church-Government.*

6. *1 Defence* (chap. 7), *Works* 6.133:

Inveheris deinde in plebem, caecam eam et brutam, regendi artem non habere, nil plebe ventosius, vanius, levius, mobilius. Conveniunt in te optime haec omnia; et de infima quidem plebe sunt etiam vera, de media non item; quo ex numero prudentissimi fere sunt viri et rerum peritissimi.

Translation, *Works* 8.180–181:

Then you inveigh against the common people as being blind and brutish, ignorant of the art of governing; you say there's nothing more empty, more vain, more inconstant, more uncertain than they. All which is very true of yourself, and it's true likewise of the rabble, but not of the middle sort, amongst whom the most prudent men, and most skilful in affairs generally, are found.

And see XII. 3; XIV. 1-3.

## XVI. THE CRITIC OF FINE ART

1. *Animadversions, Works* 3.230:

For many may be able to judge who is fit to be made a minister that would not be found fit to be made ministers themselves; as it will not be denied that he may be the competent judge of a neat picture, or elegant poem, that cannot limn the like.

2. *An Apology, Works* 3.308:

For as none can judge of a painter or statuary but he who is an artist, that is, either in the practic or the theory, which is often separated from the practic and judges learnedly without it, so none can judge of a Christian teacher but he who hath either the practice or the knowledge of Christian religion, though not so artfully digested in him.

## XVII. MILTON'S REQUESTS FOR CRITICISM

1. *Epist. Fam.* 3, *Works* 7.371–372:

Quidam enim aedium nostrarum socius, qui comitiis his academicis in disputatione philosophica responsurus erat, carmina super quaestionibus pro more annuo componenda,...forte meae puerilitati commisit. Haec[1] quidem typis donata ad te[2] misi, utpote quem norim rerum poeticarum judicem, acerrimum, et mearum candidissimum.

Translation by Hall, pp. 17–18:

One of the fellows of college, who had to appear in a public philosophical disputation, happened to commit to my inexperience the poem which is annually composed on the question....Having been printed, I send you a copy, knowing you to be a very acute judge of poetry, and a very candid one of mine.

2. *Elegia* 6.89–90:

Te,[3] quoque pressa manent patriis meditata cicutis;
Tu mihi, cui recitem, iudicis instar eris.

Translation by Cowper, p. 595:

Verse, that, reserved in secret, shall attend
Thy candid voice, my critic and my friend!

## XVIII. CULTURE AND THE LIFE OF THE STATE

1. *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.460:

Ubi nullae vigent artes, ubi omnis exterminatur eruditio, ne ullum quidem ibi viri boni vestigium est, grassatur immanitas atque horrida barbaries.

Translation by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.299:

Where no arts flourish, where all learning is exterminated, there is no trace of a good man, but cruelty and horrid barbarism stalk abroad.

2. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 5.29:

When the esteem of science and liberal study waxes low in the Commonwealth, we may presume that also there all civil virtue and worthy action is grown as low to a decline; and then eloquence, as it were consorted in the same destiny, with the decrease and fall of virtue, corrupts also and fades.

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[1] The poem was *Naturam Non Pati Senium.* [2] Alexander Gill.
[3] Charles Diodati.

3. *Epist. Fam.* 8, *Works* 7.379–380:

Nam qui in civitate mores hominum sapienter norit formare, domique et belli praeclaris institutis regere, illum ego prae caeteris omni honore apprime dignum esse existimem. Proximum huic tamen, qui loquendi scribendique rationem et normam probo gentis saeculo receptam, praeceptis regulisque sancire adnititur, et veluti quodam vallo circummunire; quod quidem ne quis transire ausit, tantum non Romulea lege sit cautum. Utriusque enim horum utilitatem conferre si libet justum utrique et sanctum civium convictum alter ille solus efficere potest; hic vero solus liberalem, et splendidum, et luculentum, quod proxime in votis est. Ille in hostem fines invadentem, ardorem credo excelsum, et intrepida consilia suppeditat; hic barbariem animos hominum late incursantem, foedam et intestinam ingeniorum perduellem, docta aurium censura, authorumque bonorum expedita manu, explodendam sibi, et debellandam suscipit. Neque enim qui sermo, purusne an corruptus, quaeve loquendi proprietas quotidiana populo sit, parvi interesse arbitrandum est, quae res Athenis non semel saluti fuit. Immo vero, quod Platonis sententia est, immutato vestiendi more habituque graves in Republica motus, mutationesque portendi, equidem potius collabente in vitium atque errorem loquendi usu, occasum ejus urbis, remque humilem et obscuram subsequi crediderim. Verba enim partim inscita et putida, partim mendosa, et perperam prolata; quid nisi ignavos et oscitantes, et ad servile quidvis jam olim paratos incolarum animos haud levi indicio declarant? Contra, nullum unquam audivimus imperium, nullam civitatem, non mediocriter saltem floruisse quamdiu linguae sua gratia suusque cultus constitit.

Translation by Fellowes (1. xi–xii):

I hold him to deserve the highest praise who fixes the principles, and forms the manners of a state, and makes the wisdom of his administration conspicuous both at home and abroad. But I assign the second place to him who endeavors by precepts and by rules to perpetuate that style and idiom of speech and composition which have flourished in the purest periods of the language, and who, as it were, throws up such a trench around it that people may be prevented from going beyond the boundary almost by the terrors of a Romulean prohibition. If we compare the benefits which each of these confer[*sic*], we

shall find that the former alone can render the intercourse of the citizens just and conscientious, but that the last gives that gentility, that elegance, that refinement which are next to be desired. The one inspires lofty courage and intrepid ardor against the invasion of an enemy; the other exerts himself to annihilate that barbarism which commits more extensive ravages on the minds of men, which is the intestine enemy of genius and literature, by the taste which he inspires and the good authors which he causes to be read. Nor do I think it a matter of little moment whether the language of a people be vitiated or refined, whether the popular idiom be erroneous or correct. This consideration was more than once found salutary at Athens. It is the opinion of Plato that changes in the dress and habits of the citizens portend great commotions and changes in the State; and I am inclined to believe that when the language in common use in any country becomes irregular and depraved, it is followed by their ruin or their degradation. For what do terms used without skill or meaning, which are at once corrupt and misapplied, denote but a people listless, supine, and ripe for servitude? On the contrary, we have never heard of any people or state which has not flourished in some degree of prosperity as long as their language has retained its elegance and its purity.

4. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 5.28:

Worthy deeds are not often destitute of worthy relaters—as by a certain fate great acts and great eloquence have most commonly gone hand in hand, equaling and honoring each other in the same ages.

5. *Easy Way, Works* 5.450–451:

They should have here also schools and academies at their own choice, wherein their children may be bred up in their own sight to all learning and noble education; not in grammar only, but in all liberal arts and exercises. This would soon spread much more knowledge and civility, yea, religion, through all parts of the land, by communicating the natural heat of government and culture more distributively to all extreme parts, which now lie numb and neglected; would soon make the whole nation more industrious, more ingenuous at home, more potent, more honorable, abroad.

6. *Hirelings, Works* 5.370:

To erect in greater number, all over the land, schools, and competent libraries to those schools, where languages and arts may be taught free together, without the needless, unprofitable, and inconvenient removing to another place. So all the land would be soon better civilized.

7. *Areopagitica, Works* 4.398:

Out of those ages[1] to whose polite wisdom and letters we owe that we are not yet Goths and Jutlanders.

8. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 4), *Works* 5.162:

The Greek and Latin tongue, with other liberal arts, arithmetic, music, astronomy, and the like, began first to flourish among the Saxons, as did also the whole land under potent and religious kings.

9. *P. R.* 4.80–85:

All nations now to Rome obedience pay—
To Rome's great emperor, whose wide domain,
In ample territory, wealth and power,
Civility of manners, arts and arms,
And long renown, thou justly may'st prefer
Before the Parthian.

10. *2 Defence, Works* 6.285:

Verum ego Italiam, non, ut tu putas, facinorosorum latibulum aut asylum, sed humanitatis potius, et civilium doctrinarum omnium hospitium, et noveram antea et expertus sum.

Translation by Fellowes, (6.399):

I well knew, and have since experienced, that Italy, instead of being as you suppose, the general receptacle of vice, was the seat of civilization and the hospitable domicile of every species of erudition.

And see IV. C. 2; XI. C.7; XXII. 1.

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[1] This excerpt is immediately preceded by a reference to 'the old and elegant humanity of Greece.'

## XIX. THE SERVICE RENDERED BY LITERATURE

### 1. *2 Defence, Works* 6.249–250:

Neque enim militiae labores et pericula sic defugi, ut non alia ratione, et operam, multo utiliorem, nec minore cum periculo meis civibus navarim....Nam cum ab adolescentulo humanioribus essem studiis, ut qui maxime deditus, et ingenio semper quam corpore validior, posthabita castrensi opera, qua me gregarius quilibet robustior facile superasset, ad me contuli, quibus plus potui; ut parte mei meliore ac potiore, si saperem, non deteriore, ad rationes patriae, causamque hanc praestantissimam, quantum maxime possem momentum accederem. Sic itaque existimabam, si illos Deus res gerere tam praeclaras voluit, esse itidem alios a quibus gestas dici pro dignitate atque ornari, et defensam armis veritatem, ratione etiam, (quod unicum est praesidium vere ac proprie humanum) defendi voluerit. Unde est ut dum illos invictos acie viros admiror, de mea interim provincia non querar; immo mihi gratuler, et gratias insuper largitori munerum coelesti iterum summas agam obtigisse talem ut, aliis invidenda multo magis, quam mihi ullo modo poenitenda videatur.

### Translation by Fellowes (6.364):

For though I did not participate in the toils or dangers of the war, yet I was at the same time engaged in a service not less hazardous to myself, and more beneficial to my fellow-citizens;...for since from my youth I was devoted to the pursuits of literature, and my mind had always been stronger than my body, I did not court the labors of a camp, in which any common person would have been of more service than myself, but resorted to that employment in which my exertions were likely to be of most avail. Thus, with the better part of my frame, I contributed as much as possible to the good of my country, and to the success of the glorious cause in which we were engaged; and I thought that if God willed the success of such glorious achievements, it was equally agreeable to His will that there should be others by whom those achievements should be recorded with dignity and elegance; and that the truth which had been defended by arms should also be defended by reason, which is the best and only legitimate means of defending it. Hence, while I applaud those who were victorious in the field, I will not complain of the province which was assigned me, but rather congratulate myself upon it, and thank the Author of all good for having placed me in a station which may be an object of envy to others rather than of regret to myself.

And see XVIII. 1–10; XXII. 1.

## XX. THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

1. *Vacation* 1–58:

Hail, Native Language, that by sinews weak
Didst move my first endeavoring tongue to speak,
And mad'st imperfect words with childish trips,
Half unpronounced, slide through my infant lips,
Driving dumb Silence from the portal door,
Where he had mutely sat two years before:
Here I salute thee, and thy pardon ask
That now I use thee in my latter task.
Small loss it is that thence can come unto thee;
I know my tongue but little grace can do thee.
Thou need'st not be ambitious to be first,
Believe me, I have thither packed the worst;
And, if it happen as I did forecast,
The daintiest dishes shall be served up last.
I pray thee, then, deny me not thy aid
For this same small neglect that I have made;
But haste thee straight to do me once a pleasure,
And from thy wardrobe bring thy chiefest treasure;
Not those new-fangled toys and trimming slight
Which takes our late fantastics with delight;
But cull those richest robes and gayest attire,
Which deepest spirits and choicest wits desire.
I have some naked thoughts that rove about,
And loudly knock to have their passage out,
And, weary of their place, do only stay
Till thou hast decked them in thy best arra
That so they may, without suspect or fears,
Fly swiftly to this fair assembly's ears.

Yet I had rather, if I were to choose,
Thy service in some graver subject use,
Such as may make thee search thy coffers round,
Before thou clothe my fancy in fit sound:
Such where the deep transported mind may soar
Above the wheeling poles, and at Heaven's door
Look in, and see each blissful deity
How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,
Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings
To the touch of golden wires, while Hebe brings
Immortal nectar to her kingly sire;
Then, passing through the spheres of watchful fire,
And misty regions of wide air next under,
And hills of snow and lofts of pilèd thunder,
May tell at length how green-eyed Neptune raves,
In Heaven's defiance mustering all his waves;
Then sing of secret things that came to pass
When beldam Nature in her cradle was;
And last, of kings and queens and heroes old,
Such as the wise Demodocus once told
In solemn songs at King Alcinous' feast,
While sad Ulysses' soul and all the rest
Are held, with his melodious harmony,
In willing chains and sweet captivity.
But fie, my wandering Muse, how thou dost stray!
Expectance calls thee now another way.
Thou know'st it must be now thy only bent
To keep in compass of thy predicament.
Then quick about thy purposed business come,
That to the next I may resign my room.

2. *Divorce* (To the Parliament of England), *Works* 4.12–13:

It might perhaps more fitly have been written in another tongue; and I had done so, but that the esteem I have of my country's judgment, and the love I bear to my native language to serve it first with what I endeavor, made me speak it thus ere I essay the verdict of outlandish readers.

And see XI. C. 6; XII. 11.

## XXI. RHETORIC

### A. General References to Rhetoric.

1. *An Apology, Works* 3.322:

For me, Readers, although I cannot say that I am utterly untrained in those rules which best rhetoricians have given, or unacquainted with those examples which the prime authors of eloquence have written in any learned tongue, yet true eloquence I find to be none but the serious and hearty love of truth; and that whose mind soever is fully possessed with a fervent desire to know good things, and with the dearest charity to infuse the knowledge of them into others, when such a man would speak, his words (by what I can express) like so many nimble and airy servitors trip about him at command, and in well-ordered files, as he would wish, fall aptly into their own places

2. *Education, Works* 4.389:

And now lastly will be the time to read with them those organic. arts which enable men to discourse and write perspicuously, elegantly, and according to the fitted style of lofty, mean, or lowly. Logic therefore, so much as is useful, is to be referred to this due place with all her well-couched heads and topics, until it be time to open her contracted palm into a graceful and ornate rhetoric, taught out of the rule of Plato, Aristotle, Phalereus, Cicero, Hermogenes, Longinus.

3. *Education, Works* 4.381–382:

And that which casts our proficiency therein [i.e., in learning] so much behind, is our time lost partly in too oft idle vacancies given both to schools and universities, partly in a preposterous exaction, forcing the empty wits of children to compose themes, verses, and orations, which are the acts of ripest judgment, and the final work of a head filled by long reading and observing with elegant maxims and copious invention. These are not matters to be wrung from poor striplings, like blood out of the nose, or the plucking of untimely fruit; besides the ill habit which they get of wretched barbarizing against the Latin and Greek idiom, with their untutored Anglicisms, odious to be read, yet not to be avoided without a well-continued and judicious conversing among pure authors digested, which they scarce taste. Whereas, if, after some preparatory grounds of speech by their certain forms got into memory, they were led to the praxis thereof in some chosen short book lessoned thoroughly to them, they might then forthwith proceed to learn the substance of good things and arts in due order, which would bring the whole language quickly into their power.

4. *An Apology, Works* 3.278:

If. . .the question were in oratory, whether a vehement vein, throwing out indignation or scorn upon an object that merits it, were among the aptest ideas of speech[1] to be allowed, it were my work, and that an easy one, to make it clear both by the rules of best rhetoricians and the famousest examples of the Greek and Roman orations. But since the religion of it is disputed, and not the art, I shall make use only of such reasons and authorities as religion cannot except against.

5. *Animadversions, Works* 3.189:

It showed but green practice in the laws of discreet rhetoric to blurt upon the ears of a judicious parliament with such a presumptuous and overweening proem.

6. *Prolus.* 1, *Works* 7.411:

Scriptum post se reliquere passim nobilissimi quique rhetoricae magistri, quod nec vos praeteriit, Academici, in unoquoque dicendi genere, sive demonstrativo, sive deliberativo, sive judiciali, ab aucupanda auditorum gratia exordium duci oportere; alioqui nec permoveri posse auditorum animos, nec causam ex sententia succedere.

Translation by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.276:

All the noblest masters of rhetoric have left it everywhere written behind them, nor has the fact escaped yourselves, Fellow Academics, that in each of the kinds of speaking, whether the demonstrative, the deliberative, or the judicial, the exordium ought to be drawn from what will ensure the favor of the hearers, and that otherwise neither can the minds of the hearers be moved, nor can the cause succeed according to purpose.[2]

And see III. C. iv. 3; IV. E. 1; L. 1; V. 3; XXI. B. i. 9; D. 13; XXIII. 2.

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[1] Cf. XXI. B. i. 3.

[2] 'In this sentence we see the student of Aristotle, Cicero, and the other ancient writers on rhetoric.' (Masson's note).

## B. STYLE.

### i. GENERAL REFERENCES TO STYLE

1. *Eikonoclastes* (16) *Works* 3.455:

For the manner of using set forms, there is no doubt but that, wholesome matter and good desires rightly conceived in the heart, wholesome words will follow of themselves.[1]

2. *Sonnet* 11, 1–2:

A book was writ of late called *Tetrachordon*,
And woven close, both matter, form, and style.

3. *An Apology*, *Works* 3.309–310:

How few among them [clerks of the university] that know to write or speak in a pure style, much less to distinguish the ideas and various kinds of style: in Latin, barbarous, and oft not without solecisms, declaiming in rugged and miscellaneous gear blown together by the four winds, and in their choice preferring the gay rankness of Apuleius, Arnobius, or any modern fustianist, before the native Latinisms of Cicero; in the Greek tongue, most of them unlettered, or unentered to any sound proficiency in those Attic masters of moral wisdom and eloquence. In the Hebrew text—which is so necessary to be understood—except it be some few of them, their lips are utterly uncircumcised.

4. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.144:

I must say . . . that, after I had from my first years by the ceaseless diligence and care of my father . . . been exercised to the tongues, and some sciences, as my age would suffer, . . . it was found that whether aught was imposed upon me by them that had the overlooking, or betaken to of mine own choice, in English or other tongue, prosing or versing, but chiefly this latter, the style, by certain vital signs it had, was likely to live.

[1] Cf. XXI. A. 1.

5. *P. R.* 4.353–362:

Their orators thou then extoll'st as those
The top of eloquence—statists indeed,
The lovers of their country, as may seem;
But herein to our Prophets far beneath,
As men divinely taught, and better teaching
The solid rules of civil government,
In their majestic, unaffected style,
Than all the oratory of Greece and Rome.
In them is plainest taught, and easiest learnt,
What makes a nation happy, and keeps it so.

6. *Reformation* (Bk. 1), *Works* 3.31:

He that cannot understand the sober, plain, and unaffected style of the Scriptures will be ten times more puzzled with the knotty Africanisms, the pampered metaphors, the intricate and involved sentences of the Fathers; besides the fantastic and declamatory flashes, the cross-jingling periods, which cannot but disturb and come thwart a settled devotion worse than the din of bells and rattles.

7. *An Apology*, *Works* 3.306:

Neither was it a prayer so much as a hymn in prose, frequent both in the Prophets and in humane authors; therefore the style was greater than for an ordinary prayer.

8. *1 Defence* (Preface), *Works* 6.2:

Quae enim oratio tam augusta atque magnifica, quod tam excellens ingenium huic oneri subeundo par esse queat, ut cum illustrium virorum aut civitatum res gestas vix reperiatur tot seculis qui luculente possit scribere, opinetur quisquam haec, non hominum, sed omnipotentis plane Dei gloriose et mirabiliter facta ullis se verbis aut stylo assequi posse?

Translation, *Works* 8.3:

For what style can be august and magnificient enough, what man has parts sufficient to undertake so great a task? Since we find by experience that, in so many ages as are gone over the world, there has been but here and there a man found who has been able worthily to recount the actions of great heroes and potent states, can any man have so good an opinion of his own talents as to think himself capable to reach these glorious and wonderful works of almighty God, by any language, by any style, of his?

9. *An Apology, Works* 3.280–281:

Yea he [Sleidan] defends his [Luther's] eagerness as being of an ardent spirit and one who could not write a dull style; and affirmed he [Luther] thought it God's will to have the inventions of men thus laid open, seeing that matters quietly handled were quickly forgot. And herewithal how useful and available God had made this tart rhetoric in the Church's cause, he [Sleidan] often found by his own experience.

10. *2 Defence, Works* 6.261:

Si cui minus gravitatis nostra alicubi refutatio habere videbitur, cogitate eum debere, non cum gravi adversario, sed cum grege histrionico, nobis rem esse, ad quem dum refutationis genus accommodandum erat, non semper quid magis decuisset, sed quid illis dignum esset, spectandum duximus.

Translation by Fellowes (6.375):

If any one think my reputation wanting in gravity, he should recollect that I have not to contend with a weighty foe, but only a merry-andrew host; and that in such a work, instead of laboring to give it throughout the highest polish of elegance, it was right to consider what diction might be most appropriate to such a crew.

11. *An Apology, Works* 3.259:

We find the primitive doctors as oft as they writ to churches, speaking to them...in such a familiar way of writing as an epistle ought to be, [not] leaving the track of common address to run up and tread the air in metaphorical compellations and many fond utterances better left alone.

12. *Epist. Fam.* 23, *Works* 7.402-403:

Ego vero sic existimo: qui gestas res dignas digne scripserit, eum animo non minus magno rerumque usu praeditum scribere oportere, quam is qui eas gesserit; ut vel maximas pari animo comprehendere atque metiri possit, et comprehensas sermone puro atque casto distincte graviterque narrare: nam ut ornate, non admodum laboro;

historicum enim non oratorem requiro. Crebras etiam sententias, et judicia de rebus gestis interjecta prolixe nollem, ne, interrupta rerum serie, quod politici scriptoris munus est historicus invadat; qui si in consiliis explicandis, factisque enarrandis, non suum ingenium aut conjecturam, sed veritatem potissimum sequitur, suarum profecto partium satagit. Addiderim et illud Sallustianum qua in re ipse Catonem maxime laudavit, posse multa paucis absolvere; id quod sine acerrimo judicio, atque etiam temperantia quadam neminem posse arbitror. Sunt multi in quibus vel sermonis elegantiam, vel congestarum rerum copiam non desideris, qui brevitatem cum copia conjunxerit, id est, qui multa paucis absolverit, princeps meo judicio Latinorum est Sallustius. Has ego virtutes historico inesse putem oportere, qui facta dictis exaequaturum se sperit.

### Translation by Fellowes (1.xxxiv-xxxv):

My opinion is that he who would describe actions and events in a way suited to their dignity and importance ought to write with a mind endued with a spirit, and enlarged by an experience, as extensive as the actors in the scene, that he may have a capacity properly to comprehend and to estimate the most momentous affairs, and to relate them when comprehended, with energy and distinctness, with purity and perspicuity of diction. The decorations of style I do not greatly heed, for I require a historian, and not a rhetorician. I do not want frequent interspersions of sentiment, or prolix dissertations on transactions, which interrupt the series of events, and cause the historian to entrench on the office of the politician, who, if, in explaining counsels and explaining facts, he follows truth rather than his own partialities and conjectures, excited the disgust or the aversion of his party. I will add a remark of Sallust, and which was one ot the excellencies which he himself commended in Cato, that he should be able to say much in a few words; a perfection which I think that no one can attain without the most discriminating judgment and a peculiar degree of moderation. There are many in whom you have not to regret either elegance of diction or copiousness of narrative, who have yet united copiousness with brevity. And among these Sallust is in my opinion the chief of the Latin writers. Such are the virtues which I think that every historian ought to possess who would proportion his style to the facts which he records.

13. *Bucer*: *Divorce* (To the Parliament), *Works* 4.297:

My name I did not publish, as not willing it should sway the reader either for me or against me. But when I was told that the style, which what ails it to be so soon distinguishable I cannot tell, was known by most men,...I took it then for my proper season...to show them a name.

14. *An Apology, Works* 3.285:

The child doth not more expressly refigure the visage of his father than that book resembles the style of the remonstrant in those idioms of speech wherein he seems most to delight.

15. *Episcopacy, Works* 3.80:

As for his style, who knows it? So disfigured and interrupted as it is.

16. *An Apology, Works* 3.298:

What else there is he jumbles together in such a lost construction as no man either lettered or unlettered will be able to piece up.

17. *Colasterion, Works* 4.345, 346:

Not to speak of his abrupt and bad beginning, his very first page notoriously bewrays him[2] an illiterate and arrogant presumer in that which he understands not; bearing us in hand as if he knew both Greek and Hebrew, and is not able to spell it....Nor did I find this his want of the pretended languages alone, but accompanied with such a low and homespun expression of his mother English all along, without joint or frame, as made me, ere I knew further of him, often stop and conclude that this author could for certain be no other than some mechanic. Nor was the style flat and rude and the matter grave and solid, for then there had been pardon, but so shallow and so unwary was that also as gave sufficiently the character of a gross and sluggish, yet a contentious and overweening, pretender.

18. *Prolus.* 3, *Works* 7.426–427:

Nec materiam hanc[1] enervem, languidam, et humi serpentem erigit, aut attollit floridior stylus, sed jejunus et exuccus rei tenuitatem adeo conjunctissime comitatur, ut ego utique facile crediderim sub tristi Saturno scriptam fuisse....Immo existimo nullum unquam fuisse iis in Parnasso locum, nisi aliquem forte in imo colle angulum incultum, inamoenum, dumis et spinis asperum atque horridum, carduis et densa urtica coopertum, a choro et frequentia dearum remotissimum, qui nec emittat lauros nec fundat flores, quo denique Phoebeae citharae nunquam pervenerit sonus.

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[1] The material of scholastic studies.

[2] An anonymous writer.

Translation:

Nor is there beauty of style to elevate or dignify this nerveless, languid, groveling material; but a style both jejune and barren so fitly corresponds to the thinness of the subject-matter that I, at least, could easily believe it to have been written under the gloom of Saturn. ...I think, indeed, that there can never have been any place for these studies upon Parnassus, unless perhaps in some wild nook in the foothills, disagreeable, rough and horrid with brambles and thorns, overgrown with thistles and nettles, very remote from the dance and the assemblage of the goddesses, where grow neither laurels nor flowers—whither, in fine, the sound of the lyre of Phoebus never could penetrate.

19. *An Apology, Works* 3.256:

Can nothing then but episcopacy teach men to speak good English, to pick and order a set of words judiciously? Must we learn from canons and quaint sermonings, interlined with barbarous Latin, to illumine a period, to wreathe an enthymeme with maistrous dexterity?

20. *An Apology, Works* 3.255:

When I saw his weak arguments, headed with sharp taunts, and that his design was, if he could not refute them, yet at least with quips and snapping adages to vapor them out, which they, bent only upon the business, were minded to let pass; by how much I saw them taking little thought for their own injuries, I must confess I took it as my part the less to endure that my respected friends, through their own unnecessary patience, should thus lie at the mercy of a coy flirting style—to be girded with frumps and curtal gibes by one who makes sentences by the statute, as if all above three inches long were confiscate.

21. *Prolus.* 1, *Works* 7.411–412:

A quibus etiam quantumvis paucis, equidem probari malo quam ab innumeris imperitorum centuriis, in quibus nihil mentis, nihil rectae rationis, nihil sani judicii inest, ebullienti quadam et plane ridenda verborum spuma sese venditantibus; a quibus si emendicatos ab novitiis authoribus centones dempseris, Deum Immortalem! quanto nudiores Leberide conspexeris, et exhausta inani vocabulorum et sententiuncularum supellectile, . . . perinde mutos.

Translation by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.276:

[Milton prefers to be approved by the few rather] than by numberless hundreds of those unskilled ones in whom there is no mind, no right reason, no sound judgment, but only pride in a certain overboiling and truly laughable foam of words; from whom, if you strip the rags they have borrowed from newfangled authors, then, immortal God! how much barer than my nail you would behold them, and reduced to dumbness by the exhaustion of their empty stock of words and little aphorisms.

And see VI. 1, 6; XVIII. 3.

### ii. Asianism

1. *Mane Citus Lectum Fuge,* Commonplace Book, p. 62:

Multi enim hostes somno gravi pressos et quasi sepultos adorti occisione occiderunt, et tantam stragem ediderunt, ut aut visu aut auditu miserabile sit. Millia hujusmodi exempla, quae inexhausto stylo narrare potui, mihi suppeditantur. At si Asianam illam exuberantiam imitabor, profecto vereor ne miseros auditores taedio enecabo.

Translation by Masson, *Prolusion on Early Rising, Life of Milton* 1.304:

There are many instances of persons who, attacking their enemies when they were laden, and as it were buried, in heavy sleep, have slain them slaughteringly, and effected such a massacre of them as it is a misery to see or hear of. Thousands of cases of this kind are at hand which I could relate at inexhaustible length. But if I should imitate that style of Asiatic exuberance, I fear I should kill my wretched auditors with fatigue.

And see IV. H. 2.

### iii. AFRICANISM

See XXI. B. i. 6.

### iv. ATTICISM

See VII. C. 1.

### v. LATINISM

See XXI. B. i. 3.

### vi. ANGLICISM

See XXI. A. 3.

## C. Diction.

### i. GENERAL REFERENCES TO DICTION

1. *Animadversions, Works* 3.204:

Setting aside the odd coinage of your phrase which no mint-master of language would allow for stirling.

2. *Eikonoclastes* (4), *Works* 3.365:

The King, by his leave, cannot coin English as he would money to be current.

3. *Eikonoclastes* (11), *Works* 3.417:

He insists upon the old plea of his conscience, honor, and reason; using the plausibility of large and indefinite words to defend himself at such a distance as may hinder the eye of common judgment from all distinct view and examination of his reasoning.

And see IV. E. 2; XXI. B. i. 12.

### ii. EUPHONY

1. *Hist. Brit.* (Bk. 5), *Works* 5.215:

Then...set upon them in their return over Cantbrig in Glostershire, and slew many thousands, among whom Ecwils, Hafden, and Hinguar, their kings, and many other harsh names in Huntingdon.

2. *Sonnet* 11. 1-14:

A book was writ of late called *Tetrachordon*,
And woven close, both matter, form, and style;
The subject new: it walked the town awhile,
Numbering good intellects; now seldom pored on.
Cries the stall-reader, 'Bless us! what a word on
A title-page is this!' And some in file
Stand spelling false, while one might walk to Mile-
End Green. Why is it harder, sirs, than *Gordon*,
*Colkitto*, or *Macdonnel*, or *Galasp*?
Those rugged names to our like mouths grow sleek
That would have made Quintilian stare and gasp.
Thy age, like ours, O soul of Sir John Cheek!
Hated not learning worse than toad or asp,
When thou taught'st Cambridge and King Edward Greek.

## D. FIGURES.

1. *P. L.* 2.917–927:

Into this wild abyss the wary Fiend
Stood on the brink of Hell, and looked a while,
Pondering his voyage; for no narrow frith
He had to cross. Nor was his ear less pealed
With noises loud and ruinous (to compare
Great things with small) than when Bellona storms
With all her battering engines, bent to rase
Some capital city; or less than if this frame
Of Heaven were falling, and these elements
In mutiny had from her axle torn
The steadfast Earth.

2. *P. L.* 6.307–315:

From each hand with speed retired,
Where erst was thickest fight, the angelic throng,
And left large field, unsafe within the wind
Of such commotion—such as (to set forth
Great things by small) if, Nature's concord broke,
Among the constellations war were sprung,

Two planets, rushing from aspect malign
Of fiercest opposition, in mid sky
Should combat, and their jarring spheres confound.

3. *P. L.* 10.298–311:

Broad as the gate,
Deep to the roots of Hell the gathered beach
They fastened, and the mole immense wrought on
Over the foaming Deep high-arched, a bridge
Of length prodigious, joining to the wall
Immovable of this now fenceless World,
Forfeit to Death—from hence a passage broad,
Smooth, easy, inoffensive, down to Hell.
So, if great things to small may be compared,
Xerxes, the liberty of Greece to yoke,
From Susa, his Memnonian palace high,
Came to the sea, and, over Hellespont
Bridging his way, Europe with Asia joined,
And scourged with many a stroke the indignant waves.

4. *P. R.* 4.560–571:

To whom thus Jesus: 'Also it is written,
"Tempt not the Lord thy God," ' He said, and stood;
But Satan, smitten with amazement, fell.
As when Earth's son, Antaeus (to compare
Small things with greatest), in Irassa strove
With Jove's Alcides, and, oft foiled, still rose,
Receiving from his mother Earth new strength,
Fresh from his fall, and fiercer grapple joined,
Throttled at length in the air expired and fell;
So, after many a foil, the Tempter proud,
Renewing fresh assaults, amidst his pride
Fell whence he stood to see his victor fall.

5. *An Apology, Works* 3.278:

Doth not Christ Himself teach the highest things by the similitude of old bottles and patched clothes? Doth He not illustrate best things by things most evil—His own coming to be as a thief in the night, and the righteous man's wisdom to that of an unjust steward?

6. *Reformation* (Bk. 1), *Works* 3.28:

He [Cyprian] teaches that succession of truth may fail, to renew which we must have recourse to the fountains, using this excellent similitude: 'If a channel or conduit-pipe, which brought in water plentifully before, suddenly fail, do we not go to the fountain to know the cause?'

7. *Hirelings, Works* 5.366-367:

Certainly it is not necessary to the attainment of Christian knowledge that men should sit all their life long at the feet of a pulpited divine; while he, a lollard indeed over his elbow-cushion,...teaches them scarce half the principles of religion; and his sheep ofttimes sit the while to as little purpose of benefiting as the sheep in their pews at Smithfield; and for the most part, by some simony or other, bought and sold like them—or if this comparison be too low, like those women [2 Tim. 3. 7.] ever learning and never attaining.

8. *An Apology, Works* 3.293:

And turning by chance to the *Sixth Satire* of his[1] Second Book, I was confirmed; where, having begun loftily in Heaven's universal alphabet, he falls down to that wretched poorness and frigidity as to talk of 'Bridge Street in Heaven,' and 'the ostler of Heaven,' and there wanting other matter to catch him a heat,...with thoughts lower than any beadle, betakes him to whip the sign-posts of Cambridge alehouses, the ordinary subjects of freshman's tales, and in a strain as pitiful.

9. *Animadversions, Works* 3.208:

Who would have thought a man could have thwacked together so many incongruous similitudes, had it not been to defend the motley incoherence of a patched missal?

10. *Eikonoclastes* (2), *Works* 3.350:

No marvel though, instead of blaming and detesting his [the Earl of Strafford's] ambition,.. he [Charles I] fall to praise his great abilities; and, with scholastic flourishes beneath the decency of a king, compares him to the sun, which, in all figurative use and significance, bears allusion to a king, not to a subject.

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[1] The reference is to Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter.

### 11. *Eikonoclastes* (10), *Works* 3.413:

We meet next with a comparison, how apt let them judge that have traveled to Mecca, that the parliament have hung the majesty of kingship in an airy imagination of regality between the privileges of both houses, like the tomb of Mahomet.

### 12. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 1, chap. 6), *Works* 3.129:

When the Church grew to a settling, like those heroic patricians of Rome (if we may use such comparison) hasting to lay down their dictatorship, they [the apostles] rejoiced to call themselves, and to be, as fellow-elders among their brethern.

### 13. *Animadversions*, *Works* 3.242:

We acknowledge, and believe, the catholic reformed Church and if any man be disposed to use a trope or figure, as Saint Paul once did in calling her the common Mother of us all, let him do as his own rhetoric shall persuade him.

And see IV. E. 2.

## E. EPITHETS.

See X. 2.

## XXII. THE IMPORTANCE OF BOOKS TO MILTON

### 1. *Areopagitica*, *Works* 4.399–400:

I deny not but that it is of greatest concernment in the Church and Commonwealth to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves, as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors. For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively and as vigorously productive as those fabulous dragons' teeth; and, being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book. Who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.

2. *Tetrachordon* (Matt. 5. 31, 32), *Works* 4.198:

Confidently to those who have read good books, and to those whose reason is not an illiterate book to themselves, I appeal.

3. *Elegia* 1.25–26:

Tempora nam licet hic placidis dare libera Musis,
Et totum rapiunt me, mea vita, libri.

Translation by Cowper, p. 583:

For here I woo the Muse, with no control;
And here my books— my life—absorb me whole.

4. *2 Defence, Works* 6.289:

Ipse, sicubi possem,...mihi librisque meis, sat amplam in urbe domum conduxi.

Translation by Fellowes (6.404):

As soon as I was able, I hired a spacious house in the city for myself and my books.

5. *Epist. Fam.* 1, *Works* 7.370:

Haec scripsi Londini inter urbana diverticula, non libris, ut soleo, circumseptus.

Translation by Hall, pp. 12–13:

I write this in London, in the midst of city distractions, and not surrounded by books as I am accustomed to be.

6. *Epist. Fam.* 21, *Works* 7.399:

Orbitatem certe luminis quidni leniter feram, quod non tam amissum quam revocatum intus atque retractum, ad acuendam potius mentis aciem quam ad hebetandam, sperem. Quo fit, ut neque literis irascar, nec earum studio penitus intermittam, etiamsi me tam male multaverint: tam enim morosus ne sim, Mysorum Regis Telephi saltem exemplum erudiit; qui eo telo, quo vulneratus est, sanari postea non recusavit.

Translation by Fellowes (1.xxxi):

And, indeed, why should I not submit with complacency to this loss of sight, which seems only withdrawn from the body without to increase the sight of the mind within? Hence books have not incurred my resentment, nor do I intermit the study of books, though they have inflicted so heavy a penalty on me for my attachment. The example of Telephus, king of Mysia, who did not refuse to receive a cure from the same weapon by which he had been wounded, admonishes me not to be so morose.

And see XXIII.1.

## XXIII. THE PRINCIPLE OF SELECTION IN READING AND STUDY

1. *P. R.* 4.321–330:

However, many books,
Wise men have said, are wearisome; who reads
Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
A spirit and judgment equal or superior
(And what he brings what needs he elsewhere seek?),
Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
Deep-versed in books and shallow in himself,
Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys
And trifles for choice matters, worth a sponge,
As children gathering pebbles on the shore.

2. *Prolus.* 7, *Works* 7.466–467:

Quod si modeste ac temperanter vitam degendo, primos ferocientis aetatis impetus ratione et pertinaci studiorum assiduitate mallemus edomare, coelestem animi vigorem ab omni contagione et inquinamento purum et intactum servantes; incredibile esset, Auditores, nobis post annos aliquot respicientibus quantum spatium confecisse, quam ingens aequor eruditionis cursu placido navigasse videremur. Cui et hoc egregium afferet compendium, si quis norit et artes utiles, et utilia in artibus recte seligere. Quot sunt imprimis grammaticorum et rhetorum nugae aspernabiles? Audias in tradenda arte sua illos barbare loquentes, hos infantissimos. Quid logica? Regina quidem illa artium si pro dignitate

tractetur. At heu quanta est in ratione insania! Non hic homines, sed plane acanthides carduis et spinis vescuntur. O dura messorum ilia! Quid repetam illam, quam Metaphysicam vocant Peripatetici, non artem, locupletissimam quippe me ducit magnorum virorum authoritas, non artem inquam plerumque, sed infames scopulos, sed Lernam quandam sophismatum ad naufragium et pestem excogitatam?... His omnibus quae nihil profutura sunt merito contemptis et amputatis, admirationi erit quot annos integros lucrabimur.... Si nullum a pueritia diem sine praeceptis et diligenti studio vacuum ire sinamus, si in arte, aliena supervacanea otiosa sapienter omittamus, certe intra aetatem Alexandri magni majus quiddam et gloriosius illo terrarum orbe subegerimus; tantumque aberit quo minus brevitatem vitae, aut artis taedium incusemus, ut flere et lachrymari promptius nobis futurum credam, ut illi olim, non plures superesse mundos de quibus triumphemus.

Translation by Masson, *Life of Milton* 1.301–302:

If, by living modestly and temperately, we choose rather to tame the first impulses of fierce youth by reason and persevering constancy in study, preserving the heavenly vigor of the mind pure and untouched from all contagion and stain, it would be incredible, my hearers, to us looking back after a few years, what a space we should seem to have traversed, what a huge sea of learning to have over-navigated with placid voyage. To which, however, this will be an important help—that one shall know the arts that are useful, and how rightly to select what is useful in the arts. How many despicable trifles there are, in the first place, among grammarians and rhetoricians! You may hear some talking like barbarians, and others like infants, in teaching their own art. What is logic? The queen truly of arts, if treated according to her worth. But, alas, what madness there is in reason. Here it is not men that live, but only finches feeding on thistles and thorns. *O dura messorum ilia!* Why should I repeat that the art which the Peripatetics call metaphysics is not, as the authority of great men would have me believe, an extremely rich art—is not, I say, for the most part, an art at all, but an infamous tract of rocks, a kind of Lerna of sophisms, invented to cause shipwrecks and breed pestilence?... When all those things which can be of no profit have been deservedly contemned and cut off, it will be a matter of wonder

how many whole years we shall save.... If from boyhood we allow no day to pass without its lessons and diligent study, if in art we wisely omit what is foreign, superfluous, useless, then, certainly within the age of Alexander the Great, we shall have made a greater and more glorious conquest than that of the globe, and so far shall we be from accusing the brevity of life or the fatigue of knowledge, that I believe we shall be readier, like him of old, to weep and sob that there remain no more worlds for us to conquer.

3. *Tetrachordon* (1 Cor. 7. 10), *Works* 4.248:

A clear capacity well nurtured with good reading and observation.

4. *Hirelings, Works* 5.357–358:

To heap such unconvincing citations as these in religion, whereof the Scripture only is our rule, argues not much learning nor judgment, but the lost labor of much unprofitable reading.

5. *1 Defence* (chap. 3), *Works* 6.65:

Atque illud est quod initio statim suspicatus sum, te glossariis pervolutandis, et tricis quibusdam laboriosis magnifice divulgandis operam potius dedisse, quam bonis authoribus attente et studiose perlegendis; qui veterum scriptorum sapientia ne leviter quidem imbutus, rem praestantissimorum opinionibus philosophorum, et prudentissimorum in republica principum dictis celebratissimam, novam esse prorsus et enthusiastarum tantummodo deliriis somniatam censes.

Translation, *Works* 8.88:

But I find, as I suspected at first, and so I told ye, that you have spent more time and pains in turning over glossaries and criticizing upon texts, and propagating such like laborious trifles, than in reading sound authors so as to improve your knowledge by them; for, had you been never so little versed in the writings of learned men in former ages, you would not have accounted an opinion new, and the product of some enthusiastic heads, which has been asserted and maintained by the greatest philosophers and most famous politicians in the world.

And see VII. A. 4.

## XXIV. PLAGIARISM

1. *Eikonoclastes* (23), *Works* 3.488:

He borrows David's Psalms, as he charges the assembly of divines in his twentieth discourse, to have set forth old catechisms and confessions of faith new-dressed. Had he borrowed David's heart, it had been much the holier theft; for such kind of borrowing as this, if it be not bettered by the borrower, among good authors is accounted plagiary.

## XXV. NATURE

### A. Nature as Instinct.

1. *Animadversions, Works* 3.216:

Open your eyes to the light of grace, a better guide than nature.

2. *P. R.* 4.221–228:

Be famous, then,
By wisdom; as thy empire must extend,
So let extend thy mind o'er all the world
In knowledge; all things in it comprehend.
All knowledge is not couched in Moses' law,
The Pentateuch, or what the Prophets wrote;
The Gentiles also know, and write, and teach
To admiration, led by nature's light.

3. *Church-Gov.* (Bk. 2), *Works* 3.145:

Whether the rules of Aristotle...are strictly to be kept, or nature to be followed.

4. *An Apology, Works* 3.269:

Others were the smooth elegiac poets,...whom...for the pleasing sound of their numerous writing, which in imitation I found most easy, and most agreeable to nature's part in me, I was so allured to read.

And see X. 2; XI. C. 6; D. i. 1.

## B. NATURE AS THE FORCE AND PROCESS OF UNIVERSAL ORDER AND LAW.

1. *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 1, chap. 2) 1.17:

[Nature] means either the essence of a thing, or that general law which is the origin of everything, and under which everything acts.

2. *P. L.* 6.176:

God and nature bid the same.

3. *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 1, chap. 8) 1. 282-283:

The providence of God is either ordinary or extraordinary. His ordinary providence is that whereby He upholds and preserves the immutable order of causes appointed by Him in the beginning. This is commonly, and indeed too frequently, described by the name of nature; for nature cannot possibly mean anything but the mysterious power and efficacy of that divine voice which went forth in the beginning, and to which, as to a perpetual command, all things have since paid obedience. . . .The extraordinary providence of God is that whereby God produces some effect out of the usual order of nature. . . .This is what we call a miracle.

4. *Christian Doctrine* (Bk. 1, chap. 2) 1.16:

The Deity has imprinted upon the human mind so many unquestionable tokens of Himself, and so many traces of Him are apparent throughout the whole of nature, that no one in his senses can remain ignorant of the truth.

5. *P. L.* 12.13, 22–29:

This second source of men, . . .
Shall spend their days in joy unblamed, and dwell
Long time in peace, by families and tribes,
Under paternal rule, till one shall rise,
Of proud, ambitious heart, who, not content
With fair equality, fraternal state,
Will arrogate dominion undeserved
Over his brethren, and quite dispossess
Concord and law of nature from the earth.

6. *P. L.* 11.589–600:

Such happy interview, and fair event
Of love and youth not lost, songs, garlands, flowers,
And charming symphonies, attached the heart
Of Adam, soon inclined to admit delight,
The bent of nature; which he thus expressed:
'True opener of mine eyes, prime Angel blest,
Much better seems this vision, and more hope
Of peaceful days portends, than those two past.
Those were of hate and death, or pain much worse;
Here nature seems fulfilled in all her ends.'
To whom thus Michael: 'Judge not what is best
By pleasure, though to Nature seeming meet.'

7. *P. L.* 3.455–459:

All the unaccomplished works of nature's hand,
Abortive, monstrous, or unkindly mixed,
Dissolved on earth, fleet hither, and in vain,
Till final dissolution, wander here—
Not in the neighboring moon, as some have dreamed.

## C. NATURE IN VARIOUS SENSES AS OPPOSED TO ART.

See II. E. 1–6; VIII. A. 1; XI. D. i. 1.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS OF MILTON'S WORKS

*Ad Leonoram* (1–3) = *Ad Leonoram Romae Canentem* (three poems).

*Ad Rousium* = *Ad Joannem Rousium.*

*An Apology* = *An Apology against a Pamphlet Called a Modest Confutation.*

*Animadversions* = *Animadversions upon the Remonstrant's Defence against Smectymnuus.*

*Artis Logicae* = *Artis Logicae Plenior Institutio.*

*Bucer: Divorce* = *The Judgment of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce.*

*Christian Doctrine* = *De Doctrina Christiana.*

*Church-Gov.* = *The Reason of Church-Government Urged against Prelaty.*

*Civil Power* = *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes.*

*Damon.* = *Epitaphium Damonis.*

*1 Defence* = *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio.* (Under the same abbreviation references are also given to Milton's English version of the first *Defence*).

*2 Defence* = *Defensio Secunda pro Populo Anglicano.*

*Divorce* = *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.*

*Easy Way* = *The Ready and Easy Way to Establish a Free Commonwealth.*

*Education* = *Of Education.*

*Elegia* (1–6) = *Elegia Prima, Secunda,* etc.

*Episcopacy* = *Of Prelatical Episcopacy.*

*Epist. Fam.* = *Epistulae Familiares.*

*Hirelings* = *Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings out of the Church.*

*Hist. Brit.* = *The History of Britain, that Part especially now Called England.*

*Il Pens.* = *Il Penseroso.*

*L'All.* = *L'Allegro.*

*Moscovia* = *A Brief History of Moscovia.*

*Nativity* = *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity.*

*Ormond* = *Observations on the Articles of Peace between James Earl of Ormond . . . and the Irish.*

*Passion* = *The Passion.*

*P. L.* = *Paradise Lost.*

*P. R.* = *Paradise Regained.*

*Prolus.* (1–8) = *Auctoris Prolusiones Quaedam Oratoriae.*

*Pro Se Defensio* = *Auctoris pro Se Defensio contra Alexandrum Morum.*

*Reformation* = *Of Reformation Touching Church-Discipline in England.*

*S. A.* = *Samson Agonistes.*

*Solemn Music* = *At a Solemn Music.*

*Tenure* = *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.*

*Vacation* = *At a Vacation Exercise.*

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